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# Our top 25 most gay friendly countries in the world 🏳️‍🌈

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Posted in Inspiration

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> *“Which is the most gay friendly country in the world Nomadic Boys?”*

It's a question we get asked a lot, which is why we initially published this article and have continued to update it every year. We can either look at it from our own personal perspective traveling as a gay couple, or from the point of view of LGBTQ locals by analyzing a country's rights and laws.

**Ultimately, it comes down to a mix of both.**

Drawing from our wealth of experience from traveling to over 100 countries (including the ones in this list), along with our **interviews with gay locals** from each place we've visited, we have sat down to discuss, assess, review and discuss again what we think are ***the*** *most gay-friendly countries in the world!*

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Toronto's gay nightlife and gay scene

# What makes a country gay friendly?

In this section, we explain and summarise how we put together this list. In a nutshell, we always start with the Spartacus index as a guide and also focus on the countries that have passed gay marriage laws. We then embellish this with our personal experience and also take into account any notable Gay Villages and annual queer events such as Pride.

- **Spartacus Gay Travel Index**: this is a detailed study carried out every year since 2012 that assesses how gay friendly every country is based on factors like the laws, hostility of locals, and more. We refer to it because it's the only study that focuses on gay travel as well as being comprehensive.
- **Gay marriage and other LGBTQ laws**: we also look at the LGBTQ laws, in particular those relating to gay marriage. We strongly believe that if a

government has pushed for progressive LGBTQ laws, this speaks **volumes** about how gay friendly that country truly is and therefore gives you a flavor of what the gay life is like for locals in these countries.

- **Pride events and official Gay Villages**: we feel that the number of Pride events and the number of *officially* recognized "Gay Villages" each country has are extremely important factors in our ranking. This is because when a government officially recognizes a "Gay Village" in local maps / geographical plans and it goes out of its way to support/encourage Pride events, it demonstrates the extent to which the LGBTQ community is celebrated, respected, and honored.
- What is gay travel like in that country: we also base our list on our firsthand experience traveling to that destination as a gay couple, specifically focusing on two questions: "Is this a destination LGBTQ travelers *want to visit?*" and "*Do we feel safe holding hands in public?*"

> 🏳️‍🌈 *Based on all of the above,* ***the most gay friendly country in the world is….*** 🏳️‍🌈

## See the world with gay friends

**Interested in seeing the world with like-minded LGBTQ jet setters?** Our friends at Out Adventures are the premier providers of gay & lesbian tours, cruises, and active adventures. Their slick and sublime escapes run twelve months per year, across all seven continents. Check out their website to see where they're off to next.

**Find out more**

*And the winner is…*

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# 1. Canada

**It's a no-brainer** for us, Canada is the most gay friendly country in the world. From our experience, unlike any other country we've visited, Canada goes over and above to welcome gay travelers. Where else in the world do you see the *(straight white male)* leader of a country leading a gay pride parade, waving a transgender flag, and crying out *"Happy Pride"?* We saw Justin Trudeau do this when we attended the Fierte gay pride in Montreal. It made our hairs stand on end *with Pride* to see this!

> ***Oh Canada Canada Canada**, we applaud and salut you. We wave the Nomadic Boys rainbow flag in your honour!*

## Discover gay Canada

No tour operator knows The Great White North quite like our Canuck friends at Out Adventures. Based in Toronto, these always-apologetic travel experts have been running both private and group tours through Canada for over ten years. Whether you're looking to surmount the Rockies, discover Toronto's underground gay scene, or witness Fierte Montreal, contact these guys for insider tips and tricks. Here's to The True North, Strong & Gay. Sorry!

**Find out more**

## Gay Canada in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #1 (with Malta and Sweden)

- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2005
- **Number of Pride events**: around 25
- **The main gay villages**: Church & Wellesley (Toronto), Le Village Gai (Montreal), The Village (Ottowa), Davie Village (Vancouver), Jasper Avenue (Edmonton)
- **Best gay events**: Toronto Pride, Fierte Montreal, Whistler Pride & Ski Festival

## LGBTQ rights in Canada

**When it comes to LGBTQ rights, Canada is a true trailblazer**, which speaks volumes about how much it protects its LGBTQ community. The State of Quebec banned discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in 1977 becoming the first jurisdiction ever to do so! Canada then went on to become one of the first countries to pass an advanced set of anti-discrimination laws nationwide in the 1990s, which included allowing LGBT people to openly serve in the Canadian military. In 2005 it became the 1st country in the Americas and the 4th in the world (after Holland, Belgium, and Spain) to legalize gay marriage. Canada also has one of the most progressive transgender laws in the world. For example, the right to change legal gender is possible without the requirement of having to undergo gender reassignment surgery and they have

formally recognized a third gender option since 2017.

*Seby filming Justin Trudeau leading Montreal Pride*

## The gay scene in Canada

**Almost every city in Canada has a thriving gay scene**, complete with rainbow crossings and numerous gay events taking place throughout the year. The main ones are the Church & Wellesley **gay village of Toronto**, Le Village Gai **gay village of Montreal**, The Village of Ottowa, the Davie Village **gay scene of Vancouver,** and Jasper Avenue in Edmonton.

## Gay events in Canada

**Canada is one of the few countries that hosts its own *national* Pride event – *"Canada Pride"***. The first one took place in Montreal in 2017. The next one is scheduled to be in **Winnipeg in 2022**. Speaking of Pride, Toronto Pride is **one of the largest in the world**, attracting almost 1.5 million people each year. Back in 2014, Toronto also hosted WorldPride.

Almost every city in Canada has an annual Pride event, often strongly supported by the local government. Beyond the Pride events, Canada also has many gay ski-based events taking place in January including the **Whistler Pride and Ski Festival**, the Tremblant Gay Ski Week, and the Quebec Gay Ski Week. Other prominent LGBTQ events in Canada include the Toronto *Inside Out* Film Festival in May and Montreal's *Black & Blue* Festival in October.

## Gay travel to Canada

**As a gay couple, we felt completely safe in all the places we visited in Canada**. This is also one of the rare countries in the world where we felt

confident enough to hold hands in public, almost everywhere!

**In terms of touristic highlights**, Canada has some of the best ski resorts in the world, a stunning landscape in the Canadian Rookies, whale watching experiences near Vancouver Island, impressive National Parks like Gros Morne and Nahanni, and of course, the famous Niagara Falls.

**Did you know?** Canada created the first gay currency! In 2019, Canada **unveiled a new $1 coin (loonie)** to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada, becoming the first country in the world to honor our LGBTQ community on its currency.

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# 2. Spain

**Ask anyone what their favorite gay Pride event is and most will likely say Madrid**. Ask any gay man where their favorite gay destination is in Europe and they will most likely include Sitges, Gran Canaria, Barcelona, and/or Ibiza on their list. These two gay men certainly think so! Yes, we're generalizing a bit, but the point is that Spain has arguably the highest number of gay-friendly destinations.

> *Spain is a trailblazer when it comes to LGBTQ rights with an incredibly **openminded society who embrace and***

***celebrate diversity***.

## Gay Spain in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #5 (with the UK, Argentina, Netherlands, and Uruguay)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2005
- **Number of Pride events in Spain**: around 15
- **The main gay villages**: Chueca in Madrid, Gaixample in Barcelona, Sitges and Maspalomas in Gran Canaria
- **Main gay events**: Madrid Pride, Circuit Barcelona, Snow Gay Weekend, Sitges Bear Week, Maspalomas Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Spain

**Spain legalized homosexuality in 1979** and passed a comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws in 1995, which included the right for LGBT persons to openly serve in the army. In 2005, Spain became the 3rd country in the world to legalize gay marriage (after Holland and Belgium). Spain then went on to

introduce the right to change legal gender, then in 2006 allowed transgender people to register their preferred gender in public documents such as birth certificates, ID cards, and passports without having to undergo any surgery. This right was extended to include transgender minors who are “mature enough”.

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## The gay scene in Spain

**All the main cities in Spain have a vibrant gay scene**, usually concentrated in a gay village or street. The main ones include Chueca in Madrid, **Gaixample in Barcelona**, the **Maspalomas gay area in Gran Canaria**, and pretty much all of Sitges (in particular the *Carrer de Joan Tarrida* street). Other smaller cities in Spain have an exciting gay scene, which includes Benidorm's Old Town area, *La Nogalera* in Torremolinos, *Barrio del Carmen* in Valencia, and *Calle de la Virgen* in Ibiza.

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## Gay events in Spain

**Almost all the cities in Spain have a Pride event**, the most famous is, of course, Madrid Pride. It is lauded for being one of the **largest gay Pride events in the world** especially in 2017 when it hosted WorldPride. Other prominent Pride events in Spain take place in Barcelona, Sitges, Maspalomas, Ibizia, Benidorm, Valencia, Bilbao and Manilva.

Spain has many other gay events happening throughout the year to look out for. Some of the best ones include the WE Party in Madrid, Circuit Barcelona, Bear Pride Barcelona, Snow Gay Weekend, Sitges Bear Week, and Delice Dream in Torremolinos.

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## Gay travel to Spain

**Spain is just *bursting* with culture**, ranking as the 3rd country in the world for the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites – a total of 48. Amongst these are Gaudi's iconic buildings in Barcelona like the Sagrada Familia, as well as the Alhambra in Granada, and the Mezquita of Córdoba (the largest

mosque in the world). In terms of museums, there's the world-famous Museo del Prado of Madrid and the Guggenheim in Bilbao. And then there's the food! From the world-famous paellas, tortillas, churos, gazpachos, jamons, and our favorite, the tasty, **juicy** Spanish chorizo sausages.

**As a gay couple in Spain, we were in paradise!** It is a destination pretty much *made* for us, with some of the **best gay beaches in Europe**, brilliant parties for everyone, and a very open-minded populace. Even in the more rural areas, we felt completely safe, which is quite rare for most countries further down in this list. In short, Spain, like Canada, ticks all the boxes and we LOVE it!

**Did you know?** Pedro Almodovar is probably the most famous gay Spanish celeb and one of the best directors in the world. His first few films in the 1980s characterized the sense of liberal revolution and political freedom Spain was going through. He then went on to direct *classics* including *Volver, All About My Mother, and Bad Education*.

*Colorful craziness onboard the Axel Hotel Pride float*

# 3. The Netherlands

**The first country in the world to legalize gay marriage**, a place *lauded* for being a bedrock of tolerance and one of the most exciting gay travel destinations with a unique Pride event along the canals of Amsterdam. As my Dutch (straight) male friend so beautifully put it when I came out to him – *“you don't need to come out to me, Stefan – I'm from Holland, the most open-minded country in the world!”*

> *As my friend said to me: “you don't need to come out to me, Stefan –* ***I'm from Holland, the most open-minded country in the world!****“*

## Gay Netherlands in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #5 (joint with Spain, the UK, Uruguay, and Argentina)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2001
- **Number of Pride events**: around 5
- **The main gay villages**: Reguliersdwarsstraat in Amsterdam
- **Notable gay events**: Amsterdam Pride, Amsterdam Bear Weekend, Amsterdam Leather Pride

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## LGBTQ rights in the Netherlands

**The Netherlands is the ultimate LGBTQ trailblazer!** Homosexuality was legalized back in 1811, but the big headline is that it became the **first country in the world to legalize gay marriage** in 2001! In relation to anti-discrimination laws, the Netherlands has everything under the sun to protect its LGBTQ community including laws to combat hate speech based on who we love, gender identity, and gender expression. The Netherlands also permits LGBT people to openly serve in the Dutch army.

In relation to transgender rights, the Netherlands is a bit more conservative. Whilst it introduced the right to change legal gender in 2014, it only recognizes a third gender option after a successful court petition.

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## The gay scene in the Netherlands

**You'll find the best of the Netherlands' gay scene in the capital city, Amsterdam**, specifically in the *Reguliersdwarsstraat* gay village. Here there are many gay cafes, shops, bars, clubs, and parties to check out, like *Prik*, *SoHo*, *Cafe Reality*, *Club NYX*, *Bear Necessity ,*and *Club YOLO* – to name just

a few! Outside of Amsterdam, cities like Rotterdam have a handful of gay hangouts, but nothing on par with Amsterdam. Find out more in our detailed **gay guide to Amsterdam**.

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## Gay events in the Netherlands

**Amsterdam Pride is well known for being one of the most unique Pride events in the world** because instead of taking place on the streets, a parade of floats proceeds through the city *on boats* along the famous canals. Other annual gay events in Amsterdam include Amsterdam Bear Weekend in March, Amsterdam Leather Pride in October, and the IQMF (International Queer & Migrant Film Festival) in December.

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## Gay travel to the Netherlands

**There are few places in the world where we feel comfortable walking in the streets holding hands** outside of the gay village, *and The Netherlands is*

*one of them!* When it comes to tolerance, open-mindedness, and equality, we found the Netherlands to be one of the most culturally liberal and diverse places in the world. It's certainly the most progressive country we've traveled to, which is why we love it!

Travel highlights of the Netherlands include the canals of Amsterdam, along with the capital's art and cultural museums like the Anne Frank House, the Rijksmuseum, and the Van Gough Museum. Other Dutch highlights include tulips, windmills, cheese markets, wooden shoes, and of course the infamous *Coffee* Shops!

**Did you know?** in 1987, the Netherlands unveiled the *"Homomonument"*, which was the first monument in the world to commemorate gays and lesbians persecuted during WW2.

*Amsterdam, one of the few places in the world where we feel comfortable in public as a gay couple*

# 4. United Kingdom

**The UK will always have a special place in our hearts**, especially Stefan's home city, London. This is where we met, back in February 2009 in Soho's GAY Bar. London has one of the best gay scenes in the world with several gay villages spread all around the city. Outside of London, Brighton and Manchester are top gay destinations that we love.

> *The UK also has the **MOST number of annual Pride events** happening out of any other country **in the world**.*

## Gay United Kingdom in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #5 (with Argentina, Netherlands, Uruguay and Spain)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2014
- **Number of Pride events**: around 150!
- **The main gay villages**: Soho/Vauxhall in London, Canal Street in Manchester, Kemptown in Brighton, Pink Triangle in Newcastle, Broughton Street in Edinburgh, Hurst Street in Birmingham, Liverpool Gay Quarter
- **Best gay events**: Pride in London, Brighton Pride, Manchester Pride and Mighty Hoopla

## LGBTQ rights in the United Kingdom

**England/Wales legalized homosexuality in 1967**, Scotland in 1981, and Northern Ireland in 1982. Between 2004-2008, the UK passed a comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws, which included allowing LGBT persons to openly serve in the army. In 2014, England/Wales/Scotland **legalized gay marriage**. Northern Ireland subsequently followed in 2020. More recently, the UK has implemented laws that **require** schools **to teach children that it's ok to be gay**!

The UK has very progressive transgender laws, which include the right to change legal gender since 2005. Whilst there isn't a third gender recognized in law, the title "Mx" is widely accepted in the United Kingdom by government organizations and businesses as an alternative for non-binary people.

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## The gay scene in the United Kingdom

Alongside Australia, the USA, and Spain, the UK has one of the highest numbers of recognized gay villages in the world! London alone has several, including Soho, Vauxhall, and Clapham. **Manchester and Brighton are often regarded as one of the best cities in the world for gay people to live**, both with large LGBTQ communities and an **exciting gay scene in Canal Street** (Manchester) and a fabulous community concentrated in Kemptown (Brighton).

Almost all the other cities of the UK have a recognized gay village or area including Hurst Street in Birmingham, The Triangle in Bournemouth, Old Market in Bristol, Lower Briggate/The Calls in Leeds, the Liverpool Gay Quarter, the Pink Triangle of Newcastle, Broughton Street in Edinburgh, Glasgow's Merchant City Pink Triangle and the streets of Charles Street + Churchill Way in Cardiff.

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## Gay events in the United Kingdom

**The UK has the highest number of Pride events out of any country in the world**, with almost every city leading its own event usually during the summer months. Brighton Pride and Manchester Pride (both in August) are often regarded as the best Pride events in Europe. London Pride in early July is the largest, attracting 1.5 million people. The 2012 London Pride was the most famous when it coincided with the year the city hosted the Olympic Games and also hosted WorldPride.

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## Gay travel to the United Kingdom

**The UK offers so much for gay tourists** such as fulfilling your Harry Potter fantasy at the Warner Bros. Studio, as well as discovering Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, the stunning Lake District in Northern England, Stonehenge, Edinburgh Castle, and many *many* more gems.

We've never experienced homophobia from any of the places we stayed at and LOVE that the government invests heavily in LGBTQ tourism via the excellent efforts made by **Visit Britain**. After all, this is the country that gave us Alan Turing, Sir Elton John, Freddy Mercury…and the 2022 *ADORABLE* Netflix hit, *"Heartstopper"*!

**Did you know?** In 2018, the UK saw the **first Royal gay wedding** when the Queen's cousin, Lord Ivar Mountbatten, married his partner, James Coyle.

*Mayor of London marching during gay Pride*

# 5. Sweden

***“Gay since 1944”* is Sweden’s official gay slogan**. A country that has its own gay slogan ffs – need we say more?! In actual fact we do: they nail it in Eurovision *(Europe’s annual unofficial gay music festival!)* every year and they gave us ABBA – the authors of *THE* best gay anthems! Sweden also has more Pride festivals per capita in Sweden than anywhere else in the world, including the largest Pride in the Nordic countries – Stockholm Pride. In 2021, all eyes were on Sweden when it co-hosted WorldPride in Malmo jointly with Copenhagen.

> *All eyes will were on **Sweden in 2021 when it co-hosted WorldPride** in Malmo jointly with Copenhagen in the midst of a global pandemic!*

## Gay Sweden in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #1 (with Canada and Malta) – also the only country to be consistently #1 since 2012!
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2009
- **Number of Pride events**: around 50
- **The main gay villages**: none – a few gay hangouts spread out in the main cities
- **Best gay events**: Stockholm Pride and Gothenburg Pride

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## LGBTQ rights in Sweden

**Sweden legalized homosexuality in 1944**, hence the “gay since 1944” slogan! They introduced one of the most comprehensive sets of anti-discrimination laws in the 1980s, which included laws against hate speech and allowing LGBT people to openly serve in the army. The right to change legal gender was also introduced in the 1970s in Sweden.

**Gay marriage was passed in 2009** although gay unions have been recognized in Sweden since 1995. In relation to transgender rights, Sweden does not (yet) officially have legal recognition of non-binary gender, but in 2017, it declassified “transgender identity” as an illness.

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## The gay scene in Sweden

**We’ll be honest, we were a bit underwhelmed by the gay scene in Sweden**. There are of course several gay bars and clubs, mainly in the big cities – Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo, but nothing on par with other gay cities like Barcelona, Berlin, or London. There are no official gay villages or gay

areas in any of the cities in Stockholm. This probably shows that Sweden is so gay friendly, that it does not need its own gay enclave.

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## Gay events in Sweden

**Stockholm Pride is the big one**, which is also the largest Pride in the Nordic countries. Other LGBTQ annual highlights include the Stockholm Rainbow Weekend which coincides with the city's Pride and West Pride in Gothenburg. Sweden prides itself on the fact that no Swede has to travel far for a Pride event, because there is one in almost every town and city! **In 2021, Malmo was the place to be when** **it cohosted WorldPride** with Copenhagen.

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## Gay travel to Sweden

From the famous Northern Lights in the winter months to the hidden alleyways in Gamla Stan in Stockholm, **Sweden packs a punch**! **Visit Sweden** is big on

LGBTQ travel and invests a lot in promoting the country as a top gay destination, even hosting EuroPride in 1998, 2008 and 2018. We felt totally safe in Sweden and comfortable holding hands in public in most places we visited. The Swedes are an extremely chilled and open-minded bunch who won't give two hoots about two men expressing PDAs!

**Did you know?** Sweden is one of the most successful countries in the Eurovision Song Contest (the massive unofficial annual gay European music festival). Not only did Sweden give us ABBA in 1974 but they've also won it 6 times. Also – Måns Zelmerlöw…

# 6. Germany

**Germany has long been famous for being one of the gayest countries in the world** especially because of the wide and diverse gay scene of Berlin. Unlike all the other European cities, which tend to have a rather limited scope for LGBTQ spaces, Berlin has a wide and diverse gay scene where everyone from the community can find refuge in.

> *Whether you're a perky twink or a rough and ready leather daddy,* ***there's something for you in Berlin****!*

Germany also has an array of fabulous politicians including Berlin's former Mayor, Klaus Wowereit, who outed himself with the famous words – “Ich bin

schwul – und das ist auch gut so!” which translates as “I am gay – and that's a good thing!”…we hear you girl!

## Gay Germany in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #10 (with Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, and Portugal)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2017
- Number of Pride events: around 30
- **The main gay villages**: Schoeneberg, Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Friedrichshain in Berlin; Heumarkt-Mathiasstrasse and Rudofplatz-Schaafenstraase in Cologne; Lange Reihe in Hamburg and Glockenbachviertel in Munich.
- **Best gay events**: Berlin Pride, Cologne Carnival, Munich Gay Oktoberfest

## LGBTQ rights in Germany

Ever since the Berlin Wall came down in 1991, Germany powered ahead to become an LGBTQ paradise. Germany passed a full set of anti-discrimination

laws in 2006, which included the right for LGBT persons to openly serve in the military, the right to change legal gender, and laws preventing hate crimes based on gender or orientation.

In 2017, Germany legalized gay marriages, and more recently, in 2019 **Germany formally recognized a third gender option**,

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## The gay scene in Germany

**Most of the big cities of Germany have a terrific gay scene.** We particularly love the exciting and **vibrant gay nightlife of Berlin**. We love it! It's so wide and diverse, where everyone from our LGBTQ community can find their tribe. Schöneberg was the first-ever gay village in the world when it took off as an LGBTQ mecca in the 1920s. Since then, so many cities around the globe have adopted a similar model where the gay community can share a safe space and support local queer businesses.

Other cities with an exciting gay scene include **Cologne**, Lange Reihe in Hamburg, Nordend in Frankfurt, Glockenbachviertel in Munich, and Gurlam Ziegelviertel in Fürstenzell.

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## Gay events in Germany

**Berlin Pride is the largest gay event in Germany**, attracting around 1 million people each year. Note that in Germany, Prides are referred to as “CSD”, which stands for “Christopher Street Day” – named after the street where the Stonewall riots in NYC took place in 1969. Hamburg and Cologne are the other two main Pride or CSD events in Germany. Other gay events in Germany include the Carnival Cologne in February, the Munich Gay Oktoberfest in October and the Heavenue Gay Christmas market in December.

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## Gay travel to Germany

**Germany offers a lot for LGBTQ tourists**, especially Berlin, a city steeped with history from the Brandenberg Gate, Reichstag Building, and Berlin Wall Memorial. Other touristic highlights include the Cologne Cathedral, the Black Forest in southwest Germany, and the super picturesque Neuschwanstein Castle. Each city heavily invests in LGBTQ tourism, especially **Visit Berlin**.

We absolutely love *love* LOVE Berlin – it feels like it's a city that is literally MADE for gays! Anything goes in Berlin and you can have as much fun here as you want to, *no limits!* It's also culturally rich with so much to do. It goes without saying that we felt very comfortable with PDAs in Berlin and the other big cities we visited in Germany.

**Did you know?** Berlin had the first gay village ever? Back in the late 1800s, the world's first-ever LGBTQ organization, the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, was founded in Schöneberg. Over the subsequent few decades, Schöneberg became the heart and soul of Germany's LGBTQ gay community. It was the Gay Village capital of the world in the 1920s!

*Pose over the fabulous Berlin skyline*

# 7. Australia

**Over the last decade, Australia has grown more and more fabulous**, with some of the most progressive LGBTQ laws in the world, lots of gay havens… and we already mentioned Mardi Gras, right? Back in 2017, the Australians were asked to vote on marriage equality and their response was a big resounding *YES.* So today, we say a big YES back to the Land Down Under!

> *The country that gave us **Mardi Gras, Matthew Mitcham, Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Speedos** and my favourite ever diva, Ms **Kylie Minogue**!*

## Gay Australia in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #18 (with Finland, Luxembourg, and Norway)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2017
- **Number of Pride events:** around 8
- **The main gay villages**: Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Darlinghurst, and Surry Hills in Sydney; Collingwood and South Yarra in Melbourne; Fortitude Valley and New Farm in Brisbane; Northbridge in Perth
- **Best gay events**: Mardi Gras in Sydney, Broken Heel Festival, Midsumma Festival in Melbourne

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## LGBTQ rights in Australia

**Australia legalized homosexuality in 1997 and passed a comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws in 2013**. Gay marriage was legalized in 2017 and LGBT people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since 2010. Australia also has very progressive transgender laws, which include the right to change legal gender since 2013, and has formally recognized a third gender option since 2003.

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## The gay scene in Australia

**Every big city in Australia has a vibrant gay scene** with a large, active LGBTQ community, especially in Sydney and Melbourne. Sydney is so gay that a **2016 study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics** showed how the LGBTQ community was spread out around the city in a “Rainbow Ribbon” starting from Pott Point, going out to Elizabeth Bay, down to Darlinghurst, Surry Hill, Chippendale, Redfern, Darlington, Erskineville, Alexandria and round to Newtown. As such Sydney has one of the most exciting gay scenes in the world including the Obelisk gay beach.

Melbourne doesn't have a central gay area like many cities but most of its main gay scenes are located around the three inner-city areas of St Kilda East, Prahran/South Yarra, and Fitzroy/Collingwood. Other cities with a notable gay village/scene include Brisbane, Perth, and the capital, Canberra.

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## Gay events in Australia

**The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras are** one of the most famous and electrifying LGBTQ festivals in the world. It takes place in late February, attracting thousands of people from all around the world, with headliners such as Cher, Kylie, George Michael, and Sam Smith. And it's going to get even BIGGER come 2023 when Sydney's Mardi Gras hosts WorldPride!

Melbourne's equivalent is the Midsumma Festival, which goes on for 22 days spread over January and February. Other notable LGBTQ events in Australia include Pride in the Park Perth, Wagga Mardi Gras, Broome Pride, ChillOut Daylesford, the Big Gay Day Brisbane in March, and the awesome Broken Heels Festival in September.

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## Gay travel to Australia

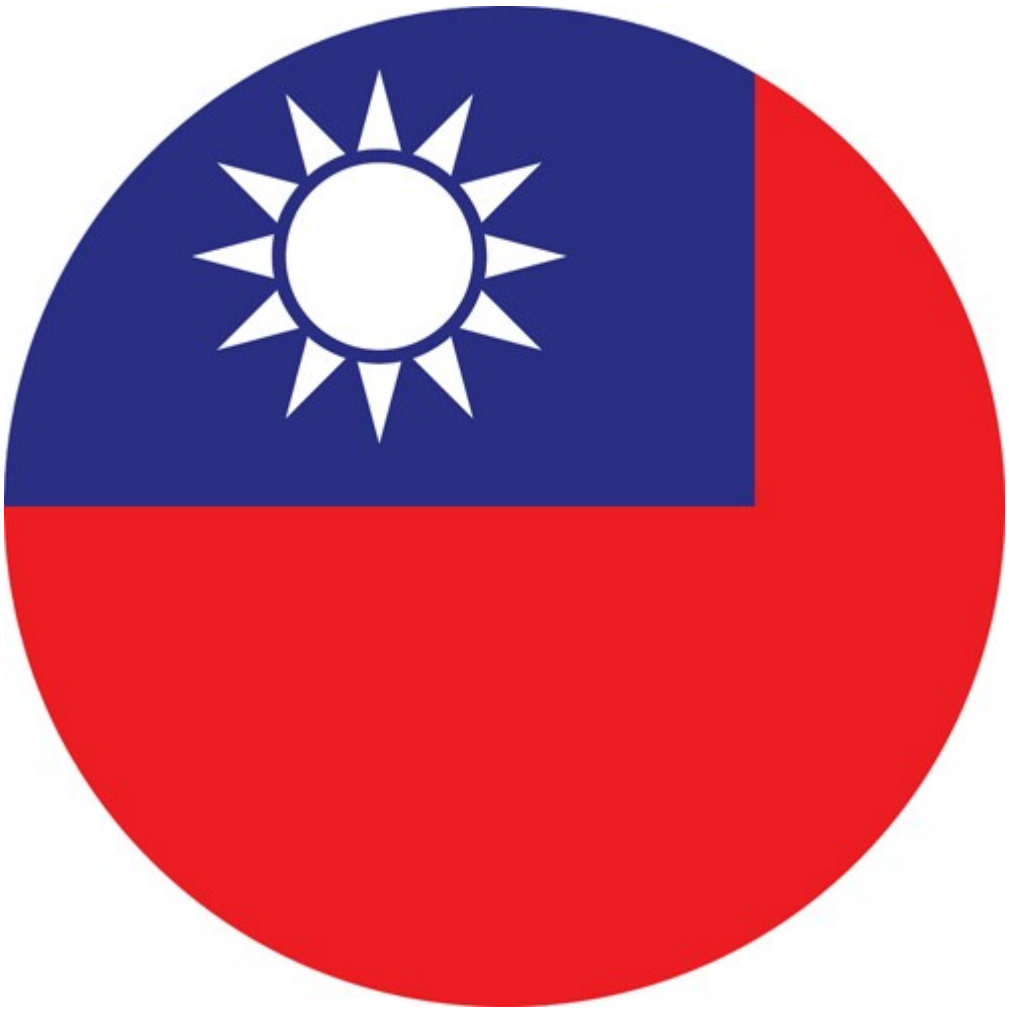
**Our ultimate gay Aussie fantasy is to rent a dramatic pink camper and pay homage to Priscilla**, traveling across the Australian Outback from Sydney to Alice Springs and spreading fabulousness across the country.

Other touristic highlights for gay travelers to Australia (beyond Mardi Gras of course!) include The Great Barrier Reef for world-class diving, the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Great Ocean Road, and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

**Did you know?** Australia is *soooo gay* that it even secured itself a spot in the annual Eurovision Songcontest. Check out the **Eurovision website** for the reason behind this quirky decision, whether or not you agree with it, we LOVE it and warmly welcome them into our big gay European arms!

*When I grow up, I want to be… fabulous!*

# 8. Taiwan



Whether or not you accept Taiwan as a “country” *(it has its own set of laws, flag, military, currency, and national anthem, so why not say we?)*, we cannot have a list of gay-friendly countries in the world and not include it. Taiwan is one place in the world we felt super comfortable and welcome as a gay couple wherever we went. It also says a lot that Taiwan has the largest gay festival in Asia (Taipei Pride) and one of the best gay scenes in all of Asia around the Ximen Red House in Taipei.

> *In 2019, it famously became **the first (and to date, only!) place in Asia to legalise gay marriage**.*

## Gay Taiwan in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #23 (with Ireland, Israel, South Africa and France)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2019
- **Number of Pride events**: 1 main one
- **The main gay villages**: Ximen Red House in Taipei
- **Best gay events**: Taipei Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Taiwan

**Taiwan legalized homosexuality in…*oh it was never illegal!*** In 2002, Taiwan began to introduce anti-discrimination laws beginning with the right for LGB people (ie not transgender people) to openly serve in the military. Despite the army ban on transgender people, Taiwan has introduced comprehensive laws relating to hate crimes, indirect discrimination, and more.

Taiwan is most famous for becoming the first place in Asia to **legalize gay marriage in 2019**. Taiwan is also positioning itself to become a transgender haven by introducing a third gender option on all ID documents in late 2020.

## The gay scene in Taiwan

**Ximen in Taipei is the main gay scene** with loads of gay bars clustered together. There are more gay places dotted around the city but the bulk is around Ximen's gay neighborhood. Other cities in Taiwan have a few gay scenes, but nothing on par with Ximen. Read more about what gay life in Taiwan is like in our **interview with local boy Po-Hung**.

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## Gay events in Taiwan

**Taipei Pride is not only the main LGBTQ event in Taiwan** but the largest in all of Asia attracting around 200,000 people! It takes place in October and includes a number of other gay parties like Formosa and the WOW Pool Party. Other cities in Taiwan host smaller, more local Pride events, in particular, Kaohsiung City and Taichung City Pride.

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# Gay travel to Taiwan

**Taiwan is a foodie destination!** If, like us, you love Asian food, Taiwan is a place you need to visit. Other touristic highlights in Taiwan include the Taipei 101, Taroko National Park, the Sun Moon Lake, the Yushan National Park, the Rainbow Village in Taichung City, and of course the food – check out the Shilin Night Market in Taipei for example!

As a gay couple traveling in Taiwan, we loved it. We felt so welcomed everywhere. We can totally understand why it is regarded as such a pink haven in Asia. The Taiwanese are very open-minded and tolerant, easily topping our list of the **most gay-friendly countries in Asia**.

**Did you know?** Taiwan is so gay, it even has a gay god with its own temple! The Rabbit Gay Temple was built to commemorate Tu'er Shen (The Rabbit God) who manages the love and relationships between gay partners and helps those looking for love. It was **founded in 2006 by Lu Wei-ming** and as far as we are aware, it is the world's only shrine for an LGBTQ god.

*Taipei, one of the gayest cities in Asia!*

# 9. Colombia

**Mention Colombia to someone and the Narcos Netflix show will inevitably come up in conversation**. Over the past few decades, Colombia has completely revolutionized to become one of the most gay-friendly countries in Latin America, *and in the world!* The culture itself is saturated in all things we love – passionate Latino dancing, beautiful men, and sparkling wear, Colombia is fast becoming a haven for all LGBTQ travelers. *Oh, and did we mention the massive* ***Theatron gay club*** *in Bogota?*

> *With big hearts, and hips that don't lie* ***Colombians are one of the most LGBTQ accepting people in the world****!*

## Gay Colombia in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #15 (with Belgium and Switzerland)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2016
- **Number of Pride events**: around 5
- **The main gay villages**: Chapinero in Bogota, El Poblado in Medellin
- **Best gay events**: Barranquilla Carnival, Bogota Pride, Cartagena Pride, Medellin Pride

## Explore Colombia on a gay tour

Out Adventures' brand new **Colombia tour** is hotter than Maluma! Beginning in Bogotá, the carefree escape will have you shaking your arepa at the largest LGBTQ club in the Americas, hiking humid jungles in

Tayrona National Park, and soaking up the country's sand, sun, and sea in coastal Cartagena. The optional gay salsa class, food tour, and snorkeling excursion make this adventure *muy caliente!*

**Find out more**

## LGBTQ rights in Colombia

**LGBTQ rights in Colombia are super-advanced by Latin American standards!** Colombia **legalized homosexuality** in 1981 and then started introducing anti-discrimination laws in all areas (employment, goods, services, etc) from 2011 onwards, which also included allowing LGBT people to openly serve in the army. In 2016 Colombia became the 4th country in Latin America to legalize gay marriages following a 6-3 vote in the Constitutional Court of Colombia.

In relation to transgender rights, Colombia allows the right to change legal gender without psychiatric or physical evaluations. Whilst it does not yet formally recognize a third gender, it does allow a “neutral” or blank space regarding gender to be inserted on birth certificates.

Find out about what the gay life is like for locals in Colombia in our **interview with Jesus** from Barranquilla.

## The gay scene in Colombia

**Bogota's Chapinero is one of our favorite gay villages, mainly because of Theatron**. It's a massive gay club that can fit up to 5,000. Every Saturday evening, the gay community comes alive here. We'd happily book a flight over in a heartbeat just to party at Theatron! Chapinero also has many other gay hangouts, which you can read more about in our **gay travel guide to Bogota**.

Other cities in Colombia have a **large gay scene, in particular Medellin**. Cartagena, Cali, and Barranquilla also have a smaller gay scene.

## Gay events in Colombia

**Bogota Pride in June and the Barranquilla Carnival in February are the most famous**. Almost all the other cities have a Pride event, usually in June. Cartagena Pride is another notable gay event in August because it also coincides with the Circuit-stvle "Rumours Festival". Other events in Colombia

to look out for which aren't expressly gay but are popular with the LGBTQ community include Medellin's Flower Festival in August and the Cali Salsa Festival in June.

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## Gay travel to Colombia

Some of our favorite travel highlights include the coffee region, the Cocora Valley, the Salt Cathedral, the Caño Cristales Rainbow River, **Cartagena's old town**, and the Tayrona National Park.

**As a gay couple, we had no issues in Colombia and felt accepted everywhere**. In one hotel in Medellin, we noticed a sign in the lift showing the penalties the police could give you for certain crimes. One of these included a fine for shouting homophobic abuse to others in public! The only thing we'd say in Colombia, which is the case for many countries in Latin America is that the machismo culture is prevalent in rural areas, particularly along the coast. However, we didn't encounter this on our travels in Colombia as we just avoided them. Read more in our **Colombia gay travel guide**.

**Did you know?** In October 2019, Ms. Claudia López Hernández became the first woman and **first lesbian to be elected mayor in Bogota**. The mayor of Bogota is widely considered the second most important political post in Colombia after the President, which is a big deal for the LGBTQ community in Colombia!

*Seby, serenading to me at the beautiful El Castillo Museum in Medellin, Colombia !*

# 10. Denmark

**Denmark has, for many years, been a pink trailblazer, legalizing love between two people of the same gender as far back as 1933. Then in 1989, it became the first country in the world to legally recognize**

registered gay partnerships. Whilst not known as being a party city or one with prominent LGBTQ events, we place Denmark high up on this list because of the superb way it co-hosted **WorldPride 2021** in the midst of a global pandemic!

> *The famous home of Lego is Lonely Planet's pick as the most gay-friendly place on Earth.*

## Gay Denmark in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #10 (with Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, and Portugal)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2012
- **Number of Pride events**: around 4
- **The main gay villages**: Straedet in Copenhagen and Skolegade in Aarhus
- **Best gay events**: Copenhagen Pride, Copenhagen Winter Pride Week, Aarhus Pride

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## LGBTQ rights in Denmark

**Denmark blitzes LGBTQ rights so effortlessly**. It's famous for being one of the most socially liberal countries in the world. The right to change legal gender was introduced way back in 1929 and homosexuality was legalized 4 years later. Then in 1989, Denmark became the first country in the world to recognize gay unions. Denmark also has very progressive anti-discrimination laws, which it started introducing in the late 1980s, which included allowing LGBT people to openly serve in the Danish army. More recently, gay marriage was legalized in 2012, and in 2014, Denmark became a trans haven by formally recognizing a third gender “X” option in passports.

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## The gay scene in Denmark

**The main gay scene is in the Straedet area of Copenhagen**, which is where we saw lots of couples walking hand in hand, however, we could have done this in most parts of Denmark without any problems. Aarhus is another cool city in Denmark to check out with a smaller but just as exciting gay scene.

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## Gay events in Denmark

Copenhagen and Aarhus have the main gay Pride events in the country. In February, Copenhagen hosts the Winter Pride Week.

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## Gay travel to Denmark

Some of our favorite touristic highlights in Denmark included Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, the Little Mermaid statue, the Nyhavn Canal and Harbour, the Amalienborg Winter Palace, and the LEGO House in Billund.

**As a gay couple in Copenhagen, we felt completely safe and free**; public displays of affection were never an issue for us anywhere in Denmark. We loved being able to stroll through Tivoli Gardens holding hands, not having to first carry out a detailed risk assessment!

**Did you know?** Centralhjørnet in Copenhagen is the world's oldest gay bar. It opened in 1917 and is still going strong today!

*Centralhjørnet gay bar in Copenhagen, the oldest gay bar in the world*

# 11. New Zealand

**New Zealand has for decades been one of the gayest and transgender-friendly countries in the world**. From as far back as 1993, they began passing super progressive anti-discrimination laws, such as removing the LGBTQ ban on the military, introducing the right to change legal gender, and introducing gay marriage.

> ***New Zealand is renowned for having many openly gay ministers in its Parliament**, like Grant Robertson, Louisa Wall, Charles, Chauvel and Georgina Beyer.*

And can we take a moment to talk about how *frickin' amazing* Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is?! She became the country's first leader to march in a gay Pride parade in Auckland in 2018 and is always speaking out in support of the New Zealand LGBTQ community.

## Gay New Zealand in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #10 (with Germany, Denmark, Iceland, and Portugal)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2013
- **Number of Pride events**: around 4
- **The main gay villages**: Karangahape Road in Auckland (or "K Road"), Ponsonby in Auckland, Wellington Central
- **Best gay events**: Big Gay Out in Auckland, the Gay Ski Week, Wellington International Pride Parade

## LGBTQ rights in New Zealand

**New Zealand legalized homosexuality for men in 1986** (for women it was never illegal). They introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws as far

never illegal). They introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws as far back as 1993 and **legalized gay marriage in 2013**. In terms of the military, LGBT people have been allowed to openly serve in the New Zealand army since 1993. New Zealand introduced the right to change legal gender in 1993 and also officially recognizes a non-binary gender.

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## The gay scene in New Zealand

**The main gay scene and LGBTQ community are focused in Auckland and Wellington**. In Auckland, most of the LGBTQ hangouts are based in and around Karangahape Road and Ponsonby. In Wellington, it's largely in Wellington Central. Other cities around the country will also have a few gay hangouts to check out.

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## Gay events in New Zealand

**Pride events have been taking place in New Zealand since the 1970s**. The main ones are the Big Gay Out in Auckland in February, Wellington International Pride Parade in March, Christchurch Pride in March, and North

Canterbury Pride, also in March. Another one to look out for is the Gay Ski Week in August/September. What we love most about the Pride events in New Zealand is that although they're small, everyone in the community gets involved, even the Prime Minister!

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## Gay travel to New Zealand

**When it comes to gay travel, New Zealand is *wow* personified**. Touristic highlights include the Fiordland National Park, the Bay of Islands, Queenstown, Lake Taupo, and Tongariro National Park, Rotorua, and of course, the Hobbiton Movie Set in Hinuera. Not only is New Zealand a stunning country to visit, but it's also super gay friendly, everywhere! New Zealanders have embraced change openly and with much enthusiasm. This is one place in the world where PDAs shouldn't be a problem anywhere in the country.

**Did you know** In 1995, Georgina Beyer became the world's first openly transgender mayor (of Carterton), as well as the world's first openly transgender Member of Parliament.

# 12. Iceland

Despite the *ice* in its name, these natives have hearts filled with warmth! Iceland for us is one of the most gay-friendly countries in the world for so many reasons. **Gay marriage was ticked off in June 2010 with a unanimous vote** in the Icelandic Althing (the national parliament of Iceland). Normally in gay marriage debates, you have a sad minority droning on about how unnatural we

are and how we pollute the sanctity of marriage, etc… But not in Iceland! Gay marriage laws passed here with flying pink colors!

> ***Gay marriage was ticked off in June 2010 with a unanimous vote** in Parliament!*

We also love that Iceland has featured so much in one of our favorite LGBTQ Netflix shows – “Sense8”, and they have LGBTQ events happening throughout the year, like **Rainbow Reykjavik** in the winter months.

## Gay Iceland in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #10 (with Germany, Denmark, Portugal, and New Zealand)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2010
- **Number of Pride events**: 3
- **The main gay villages**: Reykjavík and Akureyri
- **Best gay events**: Reykjavík Pride and Rainbow Reykjavik

## Explore iconic Iceland on a gay tour

## Explore iconic Iceland on a gay tour

Glaciers, geysers and cosmopolitan Reykjavik await on an **all-gay tour of The Land of Fire & Ice** with our friends at Out Adventures. Annually in March, they host a short and sweet escape snaking through Iceland's otherworldly countryside with a chance to see The Northern Lights. And in August, they offer a sizzling summer tour featuring a South Shore Safari that wraps up back in Reykjavik just in time for 'The Biggest Small Pride in the World'.

**Find out more**

## LGBTQ rights in Iceland

**Iceland legalized homosexuality in 1940** and they introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws between 1996-2018. Gay marriage was voted unanimously by parliament in 2010. In relation to the military, Iceland is a country that doesn't have an armed force. Iceland formally recognizes a **third gender option** by placing an X on official documents. Interestingly, just like the gay marriage law in 2010, the Icelandic law that formally recognized the third gender option was passed unanimously in the Icelandic Parliament!

## The gay scene in Iceland

In terms of population, Iceland is a tiny country with less than half a million people. Despite this, **there is a small gay scene in Reykjavik** – the Icelandic capital.

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## Gay events in Iceland

**The main two gay events in Iceland** are Reykjavík Pride in August and the Winter Pride Rainbow Reykjavik in March.

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## Gay travel to Iceland

**Iceland should be on every LGBTQ traveler's** bucket list, with incredible wonders to behold like the Blue Lagoon, spectacular geysers, the Northern Lights, the Landmannalaugar Nature Reserve, the Maelifell Volcano &

Myrdalsjökull Glacier Park, the Skaftafell Ice Cave, and the impressive Hallgrímskirkja Lutheran church.

In relation to **gay travel to Iceland**, we were so impressed! The country is a pink haven, *full stop!* When we visited we experienced zero homophobia. The Icelanders are one very open-minded bunch. They are laid back, easy-going and famous for their quirky sense of humor! Many companies are used to catering to LGBTQ travelers, but if you go be sure to check out **Pink Iceland**. They not only do a phenomenal job marketing the country as an international LGBTQ destination but also sponsor the main gay events in Iceland in particular Rainbow Reykjavik and Winter Pride.

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**DID YOU KNOW**…in February 2009 Iceland famously elected the world's first-ever openly gay national leader: Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir. She then went on to marry her partner, Jónína Leósdóttir in 2010, which made Iceland a **popular gay wedding destination**. And if Iceland couldn't get any gayer, the former *(straight!)* mayor of Reykjavík, Jón Gnarr, famously attended the 2010 Reykjavík Pride Parade dressed in full drag as *Miss Reykjavík!*

*Jon Gnarr's alter ego at Reykjavík Pride 2010*

# 13. Portugal

**Portugal's pink standing has shot up massively over the past decade**. After a long period of oppression during the “Estado Novo” years (between 1933-1974), Portugal has evolved massively. It began by decriminalizing same-gender relationships in 1982, before legalizing gay marriage in 2010 (becoming country #8 to do so), adoption in 2016, and in 2011, it passed the **Law of Gender Identity** (one of the most advanced transgender friendly laws in the world). Portugal is also one of the few countries to have an outright ban in its constitution against discrimination toward LGBTQ people.

> *Let's not forget,* ***Cristiano Ronaldo – Portugal's super handsome football stud*** *and recently voted* ***gay icon****…!*

## Portugal LGBTQ tour

Want to visit the land of cod, custard tarts and Cristiano Ronaldo? Well, our friends at Out Adventures are hosting **a sumptuous journey** that ticks off Lisbon, Porto and the Douro Valley. Highlights include a private tour of Sintra, a day sipping & supping in wine country, historic tram tours and an invigorating speed boat experience. For all the nitty-gritty details, jump over to their site. And don't forget to mention we sent you—you just might get a special deal. *wink*

**Find out more**

## Gay Portugal in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #10 (with Germany, Denmark, Iceland, and New Zealand)

- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2010
- **Number of Pride events**: 2
- **The main gay villages**: Barrio Alto and Príncipe Real in Lisbon
- **Best gay events**: Lisbon Pride and Lisbon Bear Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Portugal

**Portugal legalized homosexuality in 1982** and they introduced one of the most comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws between 2003-2013. Gay marriage was legalized in 2010 and LGB people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since 1999. Sadly, Portugal still has a ban on transgender people from serving in the Portuguese army. Portugal introduced the right to change legal gender in 2011 and formally allows people to self-identify their gender.

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## The gay scene in Portugal

**Lisbon has a fantastic gay scene with many gay bars, clubs, and parties,** particularly around the Bairro Alto and Principe Real areas. We love that there is a **gay beach** just outside of Lisbon called *Beach 19.* Porto is another popular tourist hotspot north of Lisbon with an active gay scene, particularly around the Galaria de Paris area. Down towards the south in the Algarve, there are gay scenes in Albufeira, Tavira, and Portimão.

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## Gay events in Portugal

**There are 2 main annual gay events in Portugal that take place in the capital**. The first is the colorful Lisbon Pride in June. The second is the Lisbon Bear Pride in May. The Lisbon Gay Film Festival is another excellent annual LGBTQ event in Portugal to look out for.

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## Gay travel to Portugal

Touristic highlights include Lisbon's Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, the Palácio Nacional de Sintra, the Torre de Belém, the Convento do Cristo, hiking in the

Gerês Mountain Range and the stunning UNESCO listed Castelo de Guimarães.

**We love Lisbon and know that many other gay guys feel the same way**. It's like the *next Madrid!* It's a very gay friendly city, English is well-spoken, the gay scene is fantastic, a gay beach is right on your doorstep, and the guys are *smoking hot!* The Portuguese generally have a very open-minded attitude and made us feel extremely welcome.

**Did you know?** Portugal is often touted as being one of the most gay friendly countries in the world in various surveys. What sums it up best is this beautiful and inspiring video by gay couple, Lorenzo and Pedro, who filmed people's reactions as they walked the streets of Lisbon holding hands:

# 14. Argentina

**Argentina is a treat! We've been several times and each time we fall in love even more**, especially with Buenos Aires. It's not only a spectacular country to explore, it's super gay friendly. To give you an idea, in 2010, Argentina became the first country in Latin America to legalize gay marriage

Argentina became the first country in Latin America to legalize gay marriage, making it the 10th in the world to do so, and the 2nd in the Americas (after Canada). It also has progressive laws for adoption, and when the gender identity laws were introduced in 2012, Argentina became the **world's most transgender-friendly country**.

> *In 2010, **Argentina became the first country in Latin America** to legalize gay marriage!*

In the media, **Argentina has long been a trailblazer in the Latino world**, featuring a transgender actress *Florencia De La Vega* actually playing an openly transgender character as far back as 2004 in the telenovela *Los Roldán*. Then in 2005 the television dating show *12 Corazones-Especial* became the first in the country to exclusively feature gay men who kissed on camera – *uncensored!*

## Gay Argentina in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #5 (with Spain, the Netherlands, the UK, and Uruguay)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2010
- **Number of Pride events**: around 2
- **The main gay villages**: Palermo in Buenos Aires
- **Best gay events**: Buenos Aires Pride, Gay Vendimia Grape Harvesting Festival in Mendoza, Queer Tango Festival in Buenos

Aires

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## LGBTQ rights in Argentina

**Argentina legalized homosexuality in 1887** and is currently developing a set of anti-discrimination laws that are being implemented in Rosario and Buenos Aires, hopefully soon nationwide. Argentina legalized gay marriage in 2010 and LGBT people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since 2009.

The right to change legal gender was introduced in 2012, which allows transgender people to identify with their chosen gender on official documents without first having to receive hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery, or psychiatric counseling. Read more about **LGBTQ rights in Argentina**.

---

## The gay scene in Argentina

We love the **gay scene in Buenos Aires**. It has heaps of bars and clubs spread out between Palermo and San Telmo like Glam, Sitges, and Peuteo. We also love Buenos Aires because of the queer milongas (tango dance halls)

where you can learn to dance queer tango. Most other cities in Argentina have a gay scene, such as **Mendoza** and **Córdoba**. The **city of Rosario** is considered the most gay-friendly and liberal-minded place in Argentina, often leading the way for proactive change.

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## Gay events in Argentina

**The main gay event in Argentina is Buenos Aires Pride in November** which is one of the **best Pride events in Latin America**. The Queer Tango Festival is another fascinating queer event, so unique to Argentina. In the wine capital of Mendoza, there is a gay segment in the annual grape harvesting festival in February called Vendimia.

We also love that the government actively supports and funds gay events, in particular, the **GNetwork360** conference every August.

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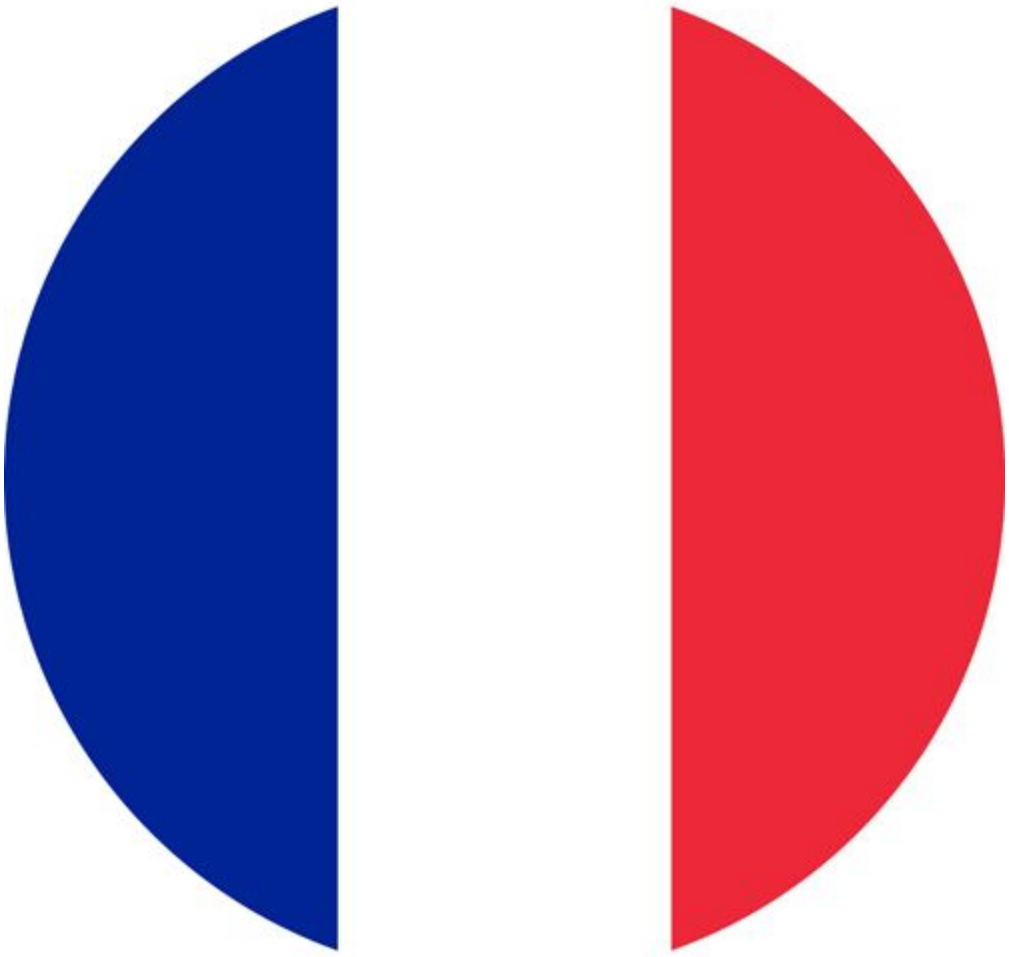
# Gay travel to Argentina

**Touristic not-to-miss highlights of Argentina include the stunning Iguazu Falls**, queer tango in Buenos Aires, wine tasting in Mendoza, trekking in El Chalten, getting up close with penguins in Punta Tombo, and going to the southernmost city in the world – Ushuaia. **We have always felt welcomed everywhere during** **our travels in Argentina** and love returning here.

> **Did you know?** Argentina jointly invented the tango (a **UNESCO-listed Cultural Heritage**) with Uruguay. But did you also know that this sultry dance was initially between 2 men in the back alleys of Buenos Aires in the late 1800s as a way to prep each other for when they could later *get with* a woman?

Today the culture of queer tango has prevailed so much that Milongas (tango halls) specializing in Queer Tango have mushroomed around the world, least of all in Buenos Aires. It's become so popular that there is even a Queer Tango Festival in November in the Argentinian capital, as well as in cities around the world, particularly in Berlin, Rome, Munich, and Paris. Read more about it in our article about **our experience learning to learn to dance the tango as a gay couple**.

# 15. France



**France has long held a belief in “laissez-faire” towards same-gender relationships**, ie not interfering in matters that may seem too personal and respecting the privacy of others. For example, former President Mitterrand was able to have a mistress and illegitimate daughter during his 14 years in office without the media pestering him on the subject. If that had happened anywhere else in the world, it would have been a huge scandal!

> ***France has long held a belief of “laissez-faire”*** *towards same-gender relationships*

The French, in general, don't bat an eyelid if you tell them you're gay and you will never have any problems with gay-bashing in France unless you go to **low-income suburb areas where homophobia is a problem**, which as a tourist, you're unlikely to do.

## Gay France in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #23 (with Ireland, Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2013
- **Number of Pride events**: around 8
- **The main gay villages**: Le Marais in Paris
- **Best gay events**: Paris Pride, Magical Pride in Disneyland Paris, and Biarritz Pride

## LGBTQ rights in France

**France legalized homosexuality in 1791**. They introduced one of the most comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws between 1982-2012. Gay marriage was legalized in 2013 and LGBT people are allowed to serve openly

marriage was legalized in 2013 and LGBT people are allowed to serve openly in the French armed forces. The right to change legal gender was introduced in 2017 without needing to undergo surgery or receive a medical diagnosis.

France does not (yet) officially have legal recognition of non-binary gender. However, in 2010, France became the first country in the world to declassify transgenderism as a mental illness.

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## The gay scene in France

**Le Marais in Paris is the most famous gay scene in France**. It's gorgeous with lots of LGBTQ businesses, bars, cafes, and parties happening throughout the year. Most of the other cities have a **small gay scene, such as Lyon**, Marseille, Lille, Montpelier, and **Nice**.

---

## Gay events in France

**Paris Pride is the main gay event in France**, as well as Magical Pride in Disneyland Paris. Most of the other cities have a Pride parade including Biarritz, Arras, Lyon, and Toulouse. France is also famous for its gay ski

festivals in March. The main ones are the European Gay Ski Week and the European Snow Pride.

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## Gay travel to France

**France is the #1 tourist destination in the world for good reason!** From culturally rich UNESCO-listed sites to world-class cuisine, beautiful beaches, stunning scenery, *and smoking hot lovers*…France really has it all! Our favorite not-to-miss highlights of France include the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Versailles Palace, the Côte d'Azur, Mont Saint-Michel, the Loire Valley Châteaux, Provence lavender fields, and Mont-Blanc – the highest peak in Europe (4,810m / 15,780 ft).

When it comes to seeing gay couples holding hands in public, most French won't bat an eyelid. The *laissez-faire* attitude is really a *thing* here!

**Did you know?** Just when you thought the French couldn't get any gayer, along comes a gay bakery in Paris that makes baguettes in the shape of a ding-a-ling, La Baguette Magique!

# 16. Finland

**Every other gay bar we've been to in the world has *Tom of Finland* homoerotic art featured**. You know the ones we mean – the images of masculinized muscly men, half nude, in super tight clothes, in suggestive positions! Like its neighbors, Finland is a trailblazer when it comes to LGBTQ rights, with strong anti-discrimination laws in place since the 1990s, long

before most other countries. Gay marriage was introduced in 2017 and it has had progressive transgender friendly laws since 2002.

## Get frosty in Finland

Embrace winter on **Out Adventures' hot new Finnish foray**. The all-gay tour kicks off in Helsinki before flying north towards the arctic circle. In our opinion, the best part of this adventure is the wide range of snowy excursions. For example, you can take the reins on an actual dog-sled in the icy Laplands, seek out The Northern Lights on a snowmobile safari, and even ~~enjoy~~ endure a polar plunge in the Arctic Ocean. Oh, and best of all, you'll slumber in a glass-roofed cabin while admiring Aurora Borealis above.

**Find out more**

## Gay Finland in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #18 (with Australia, Luxembourg, and Norway)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2017
- **Number of Pride events**: around 2
- **The main gay villages**: none, but a few bars in the main cities like Helsinki
- **Best gay events**: Helsinki Pride, Ruka Ski Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Finland

**Finland legalized homosexuality in 1911** and they introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws between 1995-2005. Gay marriage was legalized in 2017 and LGBT people are allowed to openly serve in the military. The right to change legal gender was introduced in 2002. However, sterilization is required, and transgender people must also receive a mental disorder diagnosis in order to change their legal gender. Finland does not have legal recognition of non-binary gender. Find out more about **Finland's LGBTQ rights here**.

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## The gay scene in Finland

**There are no gay villages in Finland**, however, big cities like Helsinki have a few gay bars and clubs spread out around the city.

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## Gay events in Finland

**The main LGBTQ events in Finland are the Helsinki Pride Week in June and the Ruka Ski Pride in April**. Other cities have a Pride event, such as Pirkanmaan Pride in June, Tampere, and Turku. Whilst the gay scene of Helsinki is quite small, the Pride in June is super popular, attracting crowds of around 100,000.

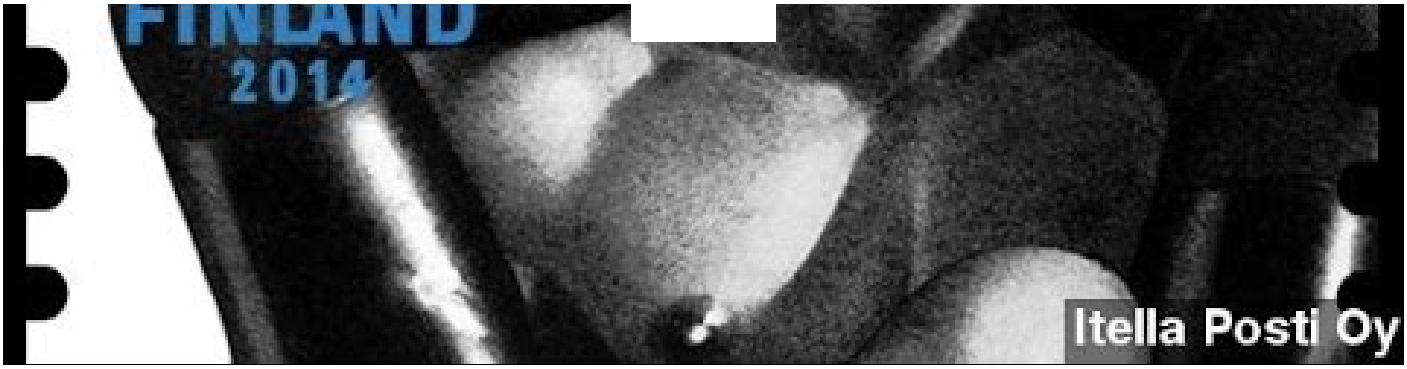
---

## Gay travel to Finland

**We think Finland as a gay destination is totally underrated**. As well as the Northern Lights, this is one place where being gay has become so normalized that we felt totally safe to walk the streets almost anywhere holding hands, knowing that no one would bat an eyelid! Remember this is the home of the highly masculinized and suggestive homoerotic Tom of Finland *art*.

Other touristic highlights of Finland include the Suomenlinna Fortress, Rovaniemi and the Arctic, the Åland Archipelago, the Northern Lights, Turku, Porvoo, and Lake Saimaa.

**Did you know?** Even the postage stamps in Finland are gay! The famous **Tom of Finland was immortalized in postage stamps** in 2014. Whilst they're not the first stamps to depict suggestive art, they are certainly the first ever to depict homo suggestive art!




# 17. Norway

When it comes to gay friendliness, the Norwegians have long been a trailblazer. **In 1981, Norway became one of the first countries in the world to pass anti-discrimination laws**. In terms of gay marriage, Norway made this law in 2009, and then in 2016, it became the 4th country in Europe to allow

change of legal gender based solely on self-determination. Interestingly, Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, was one of the first-ever heads of state to lead a Pride parade when she led the Bergen Pride parade back in 2015. Norway was also ranked as the **best country for LGBT workers**.

> *"Norwegians are girls who love girls, boys who love boys, and boys and girls who love each other. Norwegians believe in God, Allah, everything and nothin."*
>
> King Harald V of Norway

Oslo is the capital and main gay hub of the country. It has quite a big gay scene with numerous queer events taking place. But you need to bring a LOT of cash to get by here, it sure ain't cheap!

## Gay Norway in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #18 (with Australia, Luxembourg, and Finland)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2008
- **Number of Pride events**: around 35
- **The main gay villages**: none, but the main cities have a few gay hangouts, like Oslo
- **Best gay events**: Oslo Pride Festival, Bergen Pride, Tromso Arctic Pride, Raballder Sports Cup

## LGBTQ rights in Norway

**Norway legalized homosexuality in 1972** and introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination between 1981-2013. Gay marriage was legalized in 2008 and LGBT people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since 1979. Norway introduced the right to change legal gender in 2016 and since 2013 doesn't require sterilization for this. In 2016, Norway passed a law allowing the change of legal gender for transgender people solely based on self-determination.

---

## The gay scene in Norway

**There are no gay villages in Norway**, but the main cities have a few gay and gay friendly bars, in particular Oslo. Some of the best include the *London Pub, SLM Oslo, Elsker Club*, *Bob's Pub,* and even a sauna called *Saunahuset Hercules.*

## Gay events in Norway

**Oslo Pride Festival in June is the main gay event in Norway attracting around 250,000 people each year**. Most cities also have a pride event, the main ones include Bergen Pride in May, the Lillehammer Winter Pride in February, Skeive Sorlandsdager in August, and the Tromso Arctic Pride in November.

**A very unique annual LGBTQ event is the Raballder Sports Cup** – a gay sports event for handball! Also, there's the Sápmi Pride which takes place across Finland, Sweden, and Norway each year.

## Gay travel to Norway

**Norway is beautiful**. Whilst there's not much of a gay scene here or large gay events taking place, it sure packs a punch in terms of natural beauty, especially

events taking place, it sure packs a punch in terms of natural beauty, especially the Northern Lights. Just remember to bring money – *lots of it!* To give you an idea, the average pint of beer is around $10…!

Travel highlights include cosmopolitan Oslo, the endless snow-capped mountain peaks, and deep fjords like Sognefjord, also the Pulpit Rock, Tromsø, the Lofoten Islands, and the Bryggen Hanseatic Wharf in Bergen.

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**Did you know?** On 1 September 2016, **King Harald V of Norway delivered an emotionally charged speech** in favor of LGBTQ rights, refugees, and tolerance, which went viral, receiving over 3 million views. Part of the speech reads as follows:

# 18. Malta

**Malta's track record towards LGBTQ people is pretty amazing!** For instance, in 2017, The United Nation's Head of Equality and Non-Discrimination (OHCHR), Charles Radcliffe, was full of praise for Malta, calling it “a beacon of human rights for LGBTIQ issues”. He also said that Malta has become the “gold standard” with regard to LGBTQI reforms.

## Gay Malta in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #1 (with Canada and Sweden)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2017

- **Number of Pride events**: 1
- **The main gay villages**: none, but a few gay friendly bars
- **Best gay events**: Malta Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Malta

**Malta legalized homosexuality in 1973** and has been introducing anti-discrimination laws since 2004. Gay marriage was legalized in 2017 and LGB people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since 2002. Sadly transgender people are banned from serving openly in the Maltese army.

Malta introduced the right to change legal gender in 2015. Malta has had legal **recognition of a non-binary gender since 2017**.

---

## The gay scene in Malta

Malta is a tiny island country in the Mediterranean south of Italy, with a population of just under half a million, therefore it's too small to have a gay village. There are a handful of **gay bars and clubs in Malta** such as the

Michelangelo gay club. There are also a few gay friendly hangouts dotted around the capital Valletta.

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## Gay events in Malta

**Malta Pride in September is the main annual queer event**. It's a week-long festival in which the entire island gets involved.

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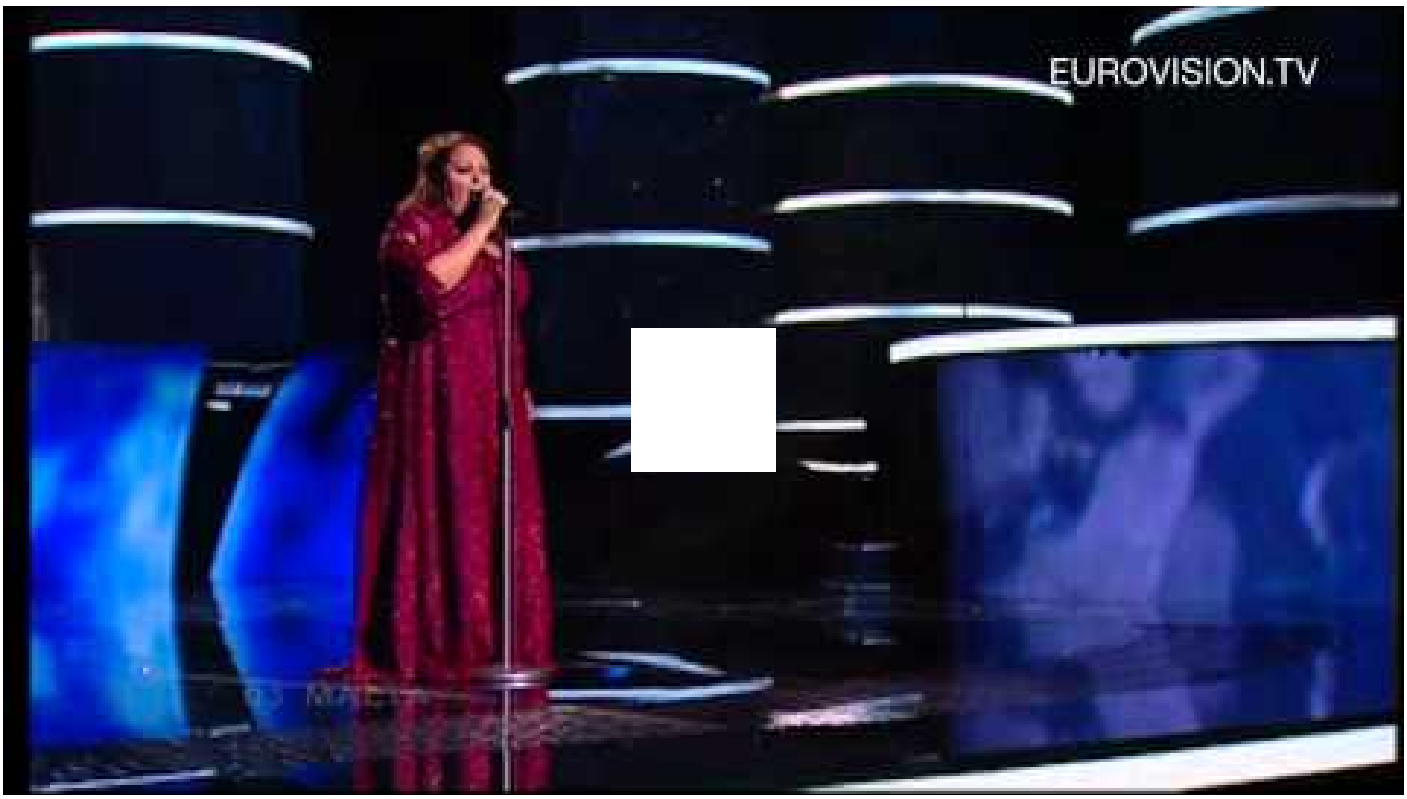
## Gay travel to Malta

**Valletta is one of our favorite European capital cities**. It's a small walled UNESCO listed city, which you can walk around in a few hours. Every corner is full of history and culture. Other highlights include The Three Cities, Mdina, the

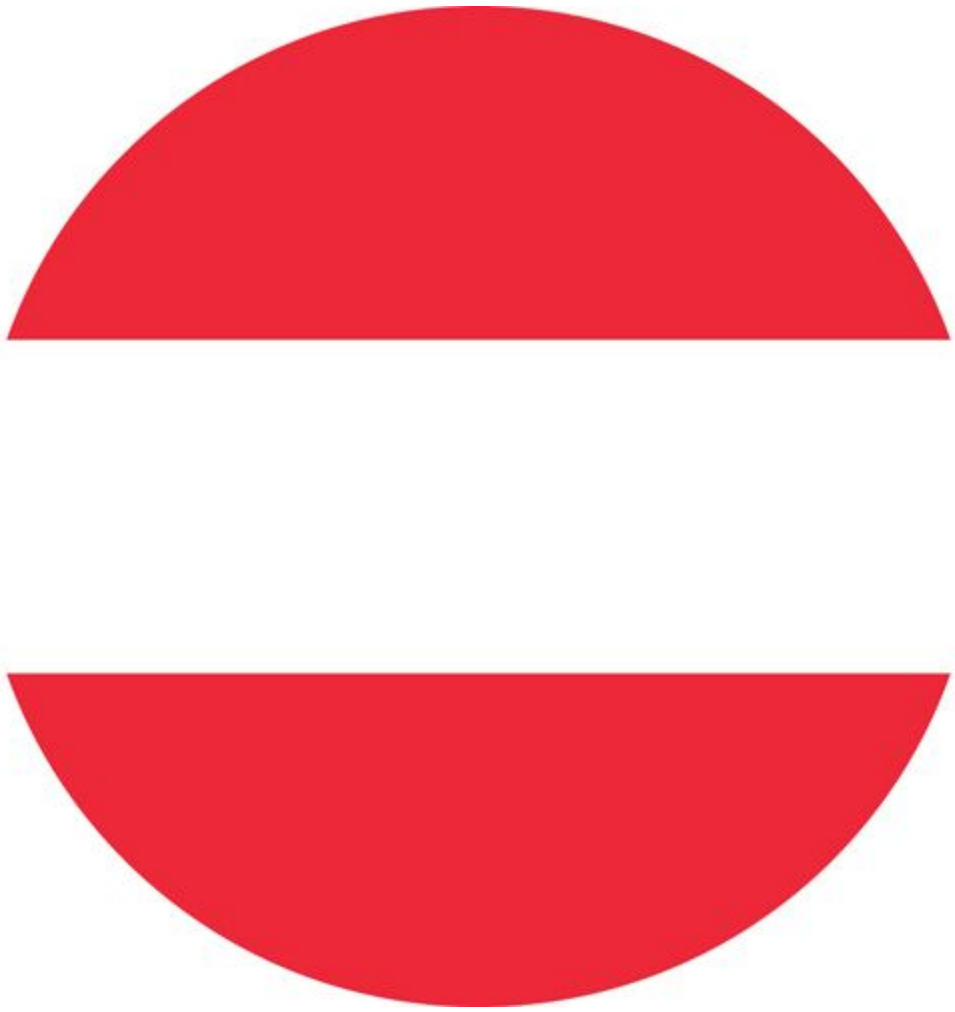
full of history and culture. Other highlights include The Three Cities, Mdina, the Dingli Cliffs, Comino, Riviera Beach, and Gozo.

We loved Malta and can see why many **people rate it as the most gay friendly country in Europe**. It has very lax laws and nobody cared about two men displaying PDAs.

**Did you know?** Malta is the most famous non-winner of Eurovision. Every year we get excited to see who will represent them. From cutie Fabrizio Faniello, Ira Losco and our favourite, the gorgeous Chiara:




# 19. Austria



**The home of Conchita Wurst was traditionally quite a conservative Catholic country**, however, over the past decade, it has evolved massively to become a pink haven in Central Europe. You could say it… *rose like a Phoenix?* Austria passed gay marriage laws in 2019, along with an array of progressive transgender legislation. In the same year, the very picturesque capital, Vienna, hosted EuroPride for its second time – the first back in 2001.

> *The best part, when Conchita won, she held up the trophy and declared in support of our LGBTQ family: "**We are unity and we are unstoppable!**"*
>
> Conchita Wurst

## Gay Austria in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: 4th
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2019
- **Number of Pride events**: around 6
- **The main gay villages**: none, but cities like Vienna have a few gay hangouts
- **Best gay events**: Vienna Pride, Gay Snow Happening, Pink Lake Festival, Ski Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Austria

**Austria legalized homosexuality in 1971** and introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination between 2004-2017. Gay marriage was legalized in 2019 and LGBT people are allowed to serve openly in the military. Austria introduced the right to change legal gender in 2009 and since 2019 it **has formally recognized a non-binary gender**.

---

## The gay scene in Austria

There are no gay villages in Austria. **The main cities have a few gay hangouts**, especially in Vienna, which has Eagle, Village, and Sling bars. Other cities with a gay scene include Salzburg, Linz, Innsbruck, and Graz.

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## Gay events in Austria

**Vienna Pride in June is the main one, which has hosted EuroPride twice** – in 2001 and 2019. Vienna Pride includes the Regenbogenparade, the “Rainbow Parade”. Other LGBTQ events in Austria include the Gay Snow Happening in March, the Pink Lake Festival in August, Ski Pride in April, the CSD Bregenz Pride in June, and Linz Pride in June.

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## Gay travel to Austria

**Vienna is stunning and a city bursting with culture and history**. This is a city that used to be the cultural capital of Europe several hundred years ago, especially in the classical music scene. Austria is the home of Mozart – specifically the picture-perfect Salzburg. Other highlights of Austria include The Vienna Hofburg, Schönbrunn Palace, Hallstatt, and Belvedere Palace.

We felt welcomed everywhere we went in Vienna and felt comfortable holding hands in public. Whilst the gay scene is small, there is a sizeable LGBTQ community and a handful of places to check out.

**Did you know?** Conchita Wurst is one of the most famous gay Austrians ever. His real name is Thomas Neuwirth who became famous for representing Austria in the 2014 Eurovision Songcontest and winning it with the song “Rise Like A Phoenix” dressed in full drag as Conchita, but with a beard! For many of us, it was the first time we saw a professional drag queen with a full beard on TV!

*Yas, sis…Rise like a Phoenix!*

# 20. Ireland

**Irish society has recently transformed massively with regard** to LGBTQ rights. What used to be a very conservative country, Ireland has certainly “come out of the closet” in relation to attitudes towards LGBTQ people. The Irish public as a whole has said “sashay away” to conservative attitudes and is embracing its spot as one of the world's most progressive countries in the world when it comes to LGBTQ rights.

> *In 2015, Ireland became the first nation in the world to* ***legalize gay marriage on a national level*** ***by a popular vote****.*

## Gay Ireland in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #23 (with France, Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2015
- **Number of Pride events**: around 5
- **The main gay villages**: no gay villages, but a small gay scene in cities like Dublin
- **Best gay events**: Dublin Pride, Dublin Bear Events, Trans Pride Dublin

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## LGBTQ rights in Ireland

**Ireland legalized homosexuality in 1993** and introduced one of the most comprehensive anti-discrimination laws between 1998-2015. Gay marriage was legalized in 2015 and the right to change legal gender was introduced in the same year. Transgender people in Ireland can self-declare their gender for the purpose of updating passports, driving licenses, obtaining new birth certificates, and getting married.

Strong Catholic beliefs still continue to encourage homophobia in the more rural areas and older generations, but the change is exciting to watch! And then, of course, they are the undisputed Eurovision champions, having won the competition a record-breaking 7 times. A country that has won the gay Olympics the most times is certainly going to be pretty gay!

---

## The gay scene in Ireland

**In the capital, Dublin, there's a handful of queer hangouts spread out around the city**. One of the best is *The George*. Other cities also have a small gay scene like Cork and Galway.

## Gay events in Ireland

**Dublin Pride in June is the main LGBTQ event in Ireland**. Other cities with Pride events include Cork Pride in July, Limerick Pride in July, Carlow Pride in July, Mayo Pride in July, and Sligo Pride in August. Dublin also hosts lots of other LGBTQ events including the Dublin Bear Events in March and Trans Pride Dublin in July.

---

## Gay travel to Ireland

**Ireland is gorgeous! The capital, Dublin, is a treat** – it was even designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2010. Other highlights of Ireland include The Cliffs of Moher, Dublin's Grafton Street, The Ring of Kerry, Killarney National Park, The Rock of Cashel, Blarney Castle, The Dingle Peninsula, The Aran Islands, and more.

We've been to Ireland many times and can definitely see a change over the past few decades as the country has quickly evolved to embrace LGBTQ rights and welcome gay tourists.

**Did you know?** In 2017, an openly gay man, Leo Varadkar, became the "Taoiseach" (ie the Prime Minister) of Ireland. We saw Leo Varadkar in person, marching in the Canada Pride in Montreal in 2017 alongside Justin Trudeau, and love that he frequently stands up for LGBTQ rights, particularly when **he met conservative Mike Pence** in 2019.

*Leo Varadkar marching at Belfast Pride*

# 21. Uruguay

“In Uruguay, every guy is at least bi…” so said our friends in Montevideo when we first arrived. Whether or not there's any truth in this, **we certainly found Uruguay to be one of the most liberal and gay-friendly countries in the world**. For a continent with such a strong influence from the Catholic Church, Uruguay has managed to cut away from this, with a strict separation of state and church dating back to the early 1900s.

> *“**In Uruguay, every guy is at least bi…**” so said our friends in Montevideo when we first arrived*

This is what has allowed it to evolve into the liberal haven it is today. It became the 1st country in South America to introduce the Welfare State in the early 1900s and introduced equal marriage laws in 2013.

## Gay Uruguay in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #5 (with the UK, the Netherlands, Argentina, and Spain)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2013
- **Number of Pride events**: around 2
- **The main gay villages**: none, but Montevideo and Punta del Este have a few gay places
- **Best gay events**: Montevideo Pride, Punta Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Uruguay

**Uruguay legalized homosexuality in 1934** and introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws between 2003-2004. Gay marriage was legalized in 2013 and LGBT people have been allowed to serve openly in the military since

2009. The right to change legal gender was introduced in the same year as well as the recognition of a third gender on official documents.

---

## The gay scene in Uruguay

The majority of the gay scene in Uruguay is in Montevideo, which includes Chains Pub, Bar Rodo, and Il Tempo. Punta del Este also has a few gay friendly hangouts including the Soho Bar. Just note, Uruguayans head out late – dinner is around 9 pm, bars get busy after 11 pm, and don't even think about going to a club before 1 am!

---

## Gay events in Uruguay

The two main gay events in Uruguay are Montevideo Pride in September and Punta Pride in the summer months of February. Both are low-key affairs, but we love them because the entire local community gets involved – families,

babies, and even dogs! The LGBT Chamber of Commerce is very active in promoting local LGBTQ-friendly businesses in Uruguay. They have an annual conference every September, which also includes a mini-festival and parties.

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## Gay travel to Uruguay

**Touristic highlights of Uruguay include the picturesque UNESCO-listed town of Colonia del Sacramento**, the Salto del Penitente, Pan de Azúcar, Montevideo's cutesy old town, Punta del Diablo, Cabo Polonio, Laguna de Castillos, Punta Ballena and the beachfront of Punta del Este.

Uruguay is often described as a "sleepy" country with the most laidback people on the planet. We can definitely agree with that. No one anywhere in the country gave two hoots about seeing two men holding hands in public. This is definitely one very tolerant and progressive country. Find out more about **gay travel to Uruguay**.

**Did you know?** Uruguay has an all-male clothing-optional guesthouse just outside of Punta del Este called *Undarius*! It's super gay, complete with purple decor and balconies that are lit up with rainbow lights. It's

also conveniently located close to the gay naturist beach of *Chihuahua*.

*Nomadic Boys chasing the rainbow in Uruguay!*

# 22. Belgium

**Belgium's LGBTQ history is enough to make it into any list of the gayest countries in the world**. In 2003, it became the 2nd country to legalize gay marriage, as well as one of the first to pass transgender and anti-discrimination laws. Interestingly, Belgium was also the second country (after France) to decriminalize same-gender relationships back in 1795.

> ***Belgium has some of the best gay parties in Europe**, including the monthly La Demence in Brussels, SPEK in Antwerp and the annual Unicorn Festival in July.*

## Gay Belgium in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #15 (with Colombia and Switzerland)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2003
- **Number of Pride events**: around 4
- **The main gay villages**: none, but the big cities have a handful of gay bars/clubs
- **Best gay events**: La Demence, SPEK, Unicorn Festival, Brussels Pride, Belgium Leatherpride

## LGBTQ rights in Belgium

**Belgium legalized homosexuality in 1795** and introduced comprehensive anti-discrimination laws between 2003-2014. Gay marriage was legalized in 2003 and LGBT people are allowed to serve openly in the military. The right to change legal gender was introduced in 2007.

Whilst Belgium does not (yet) officially have legal recognition of non-binary gender, many Belgian hospitals (such as the Ghent University Hospital) are

famous for their specialization in gender reassignment surgery. So much so that **many transgender people from France go there** for surgery due to a lack of accepting hospitals in France.

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## The gay scene in Belgium

Whilst there are no official gay villages in Belgium, **there are a handful of gay hangouts in the main cities**, especially in Brussels with *Le Baroque*, *Le Belgica*, and *Stammbar*. Other cities in Belgium with a small gay scene include Ghent and Antwerp.

---

## Gay events in Belgium

**The main Pride events are The Belgian Pride Brussels** in May, Pride Ghent in May, Antwerp Pride in August, and the Darklands Antwerpen in March. Other awesome queer events to look out for in Belgium include the Belgium Leatherpride in February, the Unicorn Festival in Antwerp in July, and monthly

dance parties like *La Demence* (the largest in Europe), and SPEK. On the subject of La Demence, look out for their annual **La Demence gay cruise** in the summer months!

---

## Gay travel to Belgium

We've been several times to Belgium as a gay couple – either on a city break to Brussels and Bruges or once on a Flanders Field "pilgrimage" to see the former WW1 battlegrounds. We've loved it each time, especially my chips-loving Frenchman! Belgium is overall very welcoming to gay travelers. When it comes to holding hands in public, we didn't feel as comfortable as in other countries. Whilst the Belgians are generally tolerant and open-minded, **homophobia has grown recently in Belgium**.

Belgium is known for medieval towns, Renaissance architecture, and as the headquarters of the European Union and NATO. Touristic highlights include the Grand Palace in Brussels, the Canals and Belfry of Bruges, the Battlefields of Flanders, Ghent's Gravensteen and Old Town, the Horta Museum, and Town Houses, the Basilica of Bruges, Meuse Valley, Mons Old Town, and more.

**Did you know?** Belgium has also had its fair share of openly gay politicians, including the world's second openly gay head of government, former Prime Minister, Elio Di Rupo (2011-2014). We also love that Belgium has a "**Rainbow Cops**" police force who are specifically trained to handle LGBTQ issues.

*Oh officer, please arrest me, I've been a very bad boy!*

# 23. USA

**Many may disagree with us placing the USA on this list at all but hear us out**. **The USA is a true dichotomy**. On the one hand, it is arguably THE gayest country in the world – the place where the bulk of modern-day popular gay culture emanates from. On the other hand, there is a lot of homophobia, particularly in the middle Red States, which is why some would criticize us for including the USA in this list in the first place!

> *USA is the country that gave us the birth of **the modern-day LGBTQ global movement,** invented **the rainbow flag,** and even **RuPaul's Drag Race***

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**We challenge you** to point us to such a large country the size of Europe (in both size and population), that has paved the way forward with LGBTQ rights

but doesn’t also have a dichotomy between safe pink havens and ultra-homophobic areas?

For us **we have to recognize** that this is the country that gave us the birth of the modern-day LGBTQ global movement, invented the rainbow flag, and even RuPaul's Drag Race. The Supreme Court's decision to legalize gay marriage in 2015 has had *(and continues to have!)* a monumental domino effect around the world.

If we were to take certain States (like NYC or California) as standalone, they’d be up there at the top battling it out with Canada and Spain, which is why we place it further down. But this doesn’t escape the fact that the USA is pretty much *the* epicenter of the gay world!

## Gay USA in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: #31
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2015
- **Number of Pride events**: around 115
- **The main gay villages**: Fire Island, Provincetown, Fort Lauderdale, Chelsea / Greenwich / Brooklyn in NY, The Castro / SoMa / Hayes Street in San Francisco, and many many *many* more!

- **Best gay events**: New York Pride, Capital Trans Pride Washington, Chicago Pride, New Orleans Mardi Gras, Folsom Street Fair, Burning Man, Aspen Gay Ski Week

## LGBTQ rights in the USA

**The USA actually only legalized homosexuality in 2003** following the Lawrence v Texas Supreme Court decision, though some States did so a lot sooner, starting with Illinois back in 1961. In 2015, **gay marriage was legalized in the USA**, which was monumental and groundbreaking, inspiring many other countries to follow suit! More recently, in June 2020, the Supreme Court ruled in the **Bostock v Clayton County case** that federal civil rights laws **do** protect LGBTQ workers from discrimination.

## Transgender rights in the USA

**The US is a dichotomy when it comes to transgender rights**. On the one hand, there are trans havens with the most progressive transgender laws on

the planet, formally allowing a nonbinary gender marker on ID documents. These include Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, District of Colombia, Washington State, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts – also hopefully soon in Rhode Island, Hawaii, Virginia, and Illinois. Sadly, on the other hand, there are a handful of homophobic States one would take caution to avoid!

---

## The gay scene in the USA

**The USA leads the way when it comes to gay villages and gay scenes**. It's huge here. Almost every State has a gay village in its main cities, even places like Texas, which have the Montrose gay village in Houston!

Some of the gay heartlands in the USA include **Wilton Manors in Fort Lauderdale**, Provincetown in Massachusetts, Fire Island in New York, Chelsea in NY, Guerneville in California, Castro in San Francisco, The South End in Boston, West Hollywood in LA, Boystown in Chicago, Capitol Hill in Denver, Philadelphia's Gayborhood, Hillcrest in San Diego, Ogunquit in Maine, New Hope in Pennsylvania, **Key West in Florida**, Asbury Park in New Jersey, Rehoboth Beach in Delaware, and so so many more! Read more in our

detailed guide to some of the **best places for LGBTQ travelers** – most of which are in the States!

---

## Gay events in the USA

**The USA has some of the biggest LGBTQ events in the world**. The most famous is **New York Pride**, which is also the home of the modern-day gay rights movement. In 2019, NYC hosted WorldPride, which attracted around 5 million people, making it the largest gay Pride event ever!

Other notable gay events in the US include San Francisco's Folsom Street Fair in September, the Capital Trans Pride in May in Washington, the New Orleans Mardi Gras in February, the Aspen Gay Ski Week in January, and **Miami Beach** Pride in April. **This is just a small selection of the many different LGBTQ events taking place across the USA every year!**

---

## Gay travel to the USA

**The USA offers so much for LGBTQ travelers**. Touristic highlights include the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the Statue of Liberty, the White House, the

Yellowstone National Park, Disney, and Universal theme parks, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Glacier National Park, Waikiki, Las Vegas, and many more…

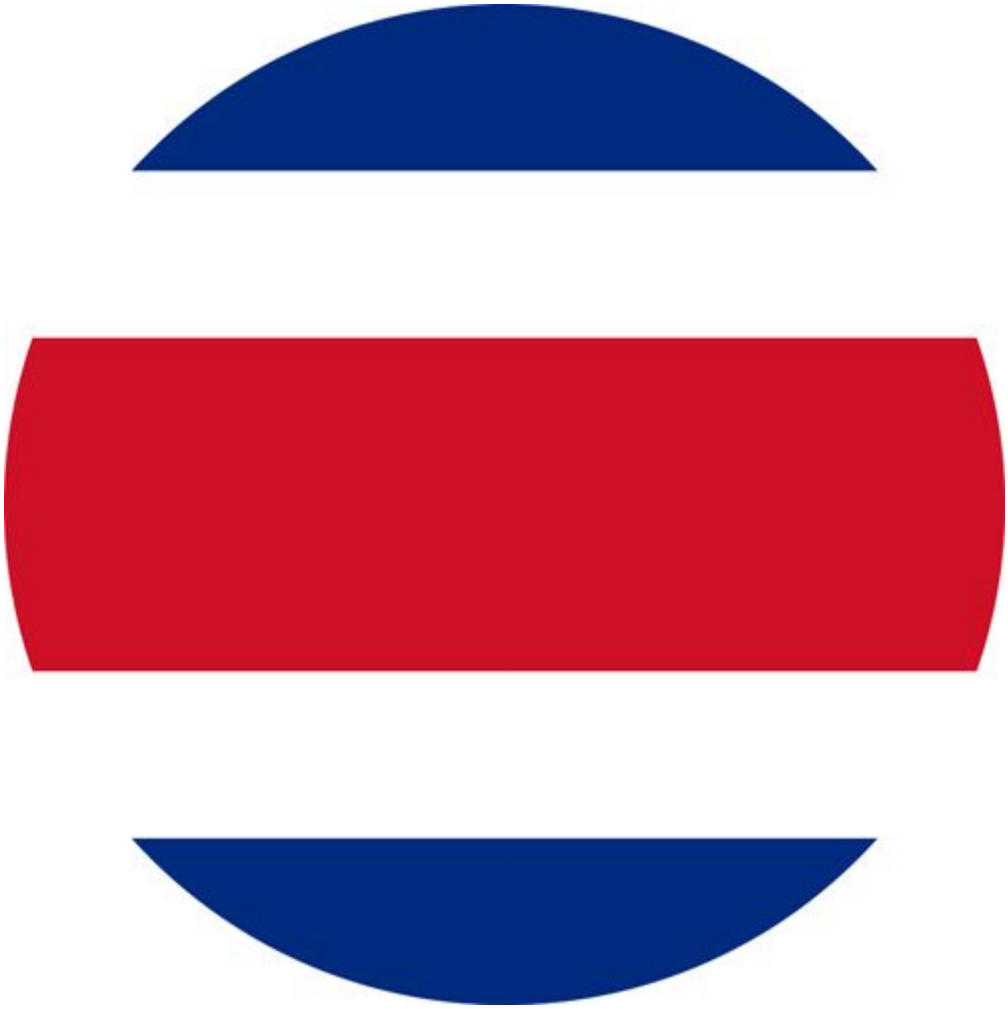
We'll be honest, when we visited Florida as a gay couple during the Trump years, we were absolutely terrified and agreed to act as "friends" in places we weren't sure about. Upon arrival, the (straight white) guy at the immigration desk could see us nervously looking at each other, smiled at us then warmly asked, *"are you boys married yet?"* and proceeded to welcome us into the USA.

On the other extreme, when taking a photograph of Miami Beach's rainbow crossing, a man rolled down his window and shouted, *"Move out of the way, fa*gots!"* This summed up the USA for us – on the one hand, it's *THE* gayest nation on the planet, but on the other hand, it is riddled with pockets of pretty extreme homophobia.

**Did you know?** The Stonewall Riots were largely thanks to the efforts of an African American transgender woman from New Jersey, Ms. Marsha P. Johnson. In June 1969 when the police raided the Stonewall

Inn gay bar in New York, 23-year-old Marsha was one of the key figures who stood up to the police during the raids, resisted arrest, and therefore led to the pivotal Stonewall protests soon after.

## 24. Costa Rica



**The first (and only) country in Central America to legalize gay marriage**: Costa Rica, we welcome you with wide-open arms! This is a very forward-thinking country that offers so much for LGBTQ tourists and has for many years been targeting gay travelers. Whilst the country doesn't have much in terms of a gay scene or queer events, it's certainly not shy of pretty landscapes and nature discoveries.

> *Costa Rica is the **first country in Central America to have legalized gay marriage***

## Gay Costa Rica in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #56
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2020
- **Number of Pride events**: 1
- **The main gay villages**: none – a few gay hangouts spread out in San Jose
- **Best gay events**: San Jose Pride

## LGBTQ rights in Costa Rica

**Costa Rica began its fabulous journey back in 1911 when it legalized homosexuality.** It is the latest member of our exclusive Gay Marriage Club after it legalized gay marriages in 2020. Just like Canada, Costa Rica was a trailblazer in relation to anti-discrimination laws, which it introduced in 1998. This included allowing LGBT people to openly serve openly in the civil defense Public Force (Costa Rica doesn't have an army).

When it comes to transgender rights, Costa Rica introduced the right to change gender in 2018 recognizing transgender people's gender identity on ID cards.

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## The gay scene in Costa Rica

Whilst Costa Rica doesn't have a gay village, **there are a few gay hangouts in the capital, San Jose**, including *Club El Teatro, The Wasp,* and *La Casita De Oraculo.*

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## Gay events in Costa Rica

**San Jose Pride takes place each year in June and grows in popularity each year**. There are no other queer events in Costa Rica taking place.

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# Gay travel to Costa Rica

**Costa Rica is a nature lover's paradise**. Travel highlights include the Manuel Antonio National Park, the Arenal Volcano, the Monteverde, and the Cloud Forests, the Dominical, Mal Pais, Santa Teresa, the Tortuguero National Park, the Osa Peninsula, and the Corcovado National Park.

Costa Rica has come a long way over the past decade and whilst it may still retain a strong influence from the conservative Catholic Church, attitudes are quickly evolving and the country has for years been embracing LGBTQ tourism.

**Did you know?** Costa Rica has had its fair share of openly gay politicians. In April 2013, Carmen Muñoz became the first openly lesbian member of the country's Legislative Assembly. In May 2018, Enrique Sánchez became the first openly gay congressman in Costa Rica.

# 25. South Africa

Africa as a continent is still lagging behind a great deal in terms of

its **treatment of LGBTQ folk**. However, South Africa really makes itself count as being the only African country represented on this list. **In 1995, under Nelson Mandela, South Africa became the first country in the world to introduce LGBTQ rights** in its constitution. It subsequently became one of the first countries to legalize gay marriage in 2006 and has very progressive transgender laws.

> *South Africa is the **only gay friendly country on the African continent***

## Go wild in South Africa

Check out this **South Africa gay tour** by Out Adventures. It begins in Zimbabwe where you'll witness the power and beauty of Victoria Falls. Then it's off to Botswana and South Africa for authentic safaris in private game reserves. Finally, you'll spend four full days soaking up the culture and cuisine of gorgeous gay Cape Town.

[Find out more]

## Gay South Africa in a nutshell

- **Spartacus rank**: joint #23 (with France, Ireland, Israel, and Taiwan)
- **Gay marriage legalized**: 2006
- **Number of Pride events**: around 5
- **The main gay villages**: De Waterkant is the main gay village in Cape Town
- **Best gay events**: Johannesburg Pride, Cape Town Pride Mardi Gras, Durban Pride, Nelson Mandela Bay Pride in Port Elizabeth

## LGBTQ rights in South Africa

**South Africa *shooketh* the LGBTQ world in the 1990s!** It became the first country to enshrine full anti-discrimination laws in its Constitution. Up until that point, no other country had ever done this before – a trailblazer not only in Africa but across the entire world! This included allowing LGBT people to

openly serve in the army. It didn't stop there, South Africa went on to introduce the right to change legal gender in 2003 and legalized gay marriages in 2006.

---

## The gay scene in South Africa

**Cape Town and Johannesburg have the largest LGBTQ communities in South Africa each with an exciting gay scene**. Cape Town has a gay village in De Waterkant as well as in Green Point and Sea Point. Over in Johannesburg, whilst there is no gay village, there are many gay places spread out across the city, particularly in Melville, Parkhurst, and Rosebank. Other cities in South Africa with a small gay scene include Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Durban, Berea, and Stellenbosch.

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## Gay events in South Africa

**South Africa sees Pride events happening in most of the cities**. The Johannesburg and Cape Town Prides are the best ones. Johannesburg Pride

Johannesburg and Cape Town Prides are the best ones. Johannesburg Pride happens in October and has been nicknamed the "**Pride of Africa**" because it is the largest (and one of the fewest) in the entire continent. Cape Town Pride is also a Mardi Gras festival and happens in February.

Other prominent Pride events in South Africa include the Pretoria LGBTQI Gay Pride in October, Durban Pride in June, Mzansi Pride Johannesburg in April, and the Nelson Mandela Bay Pride in Port Elizabeth in November.

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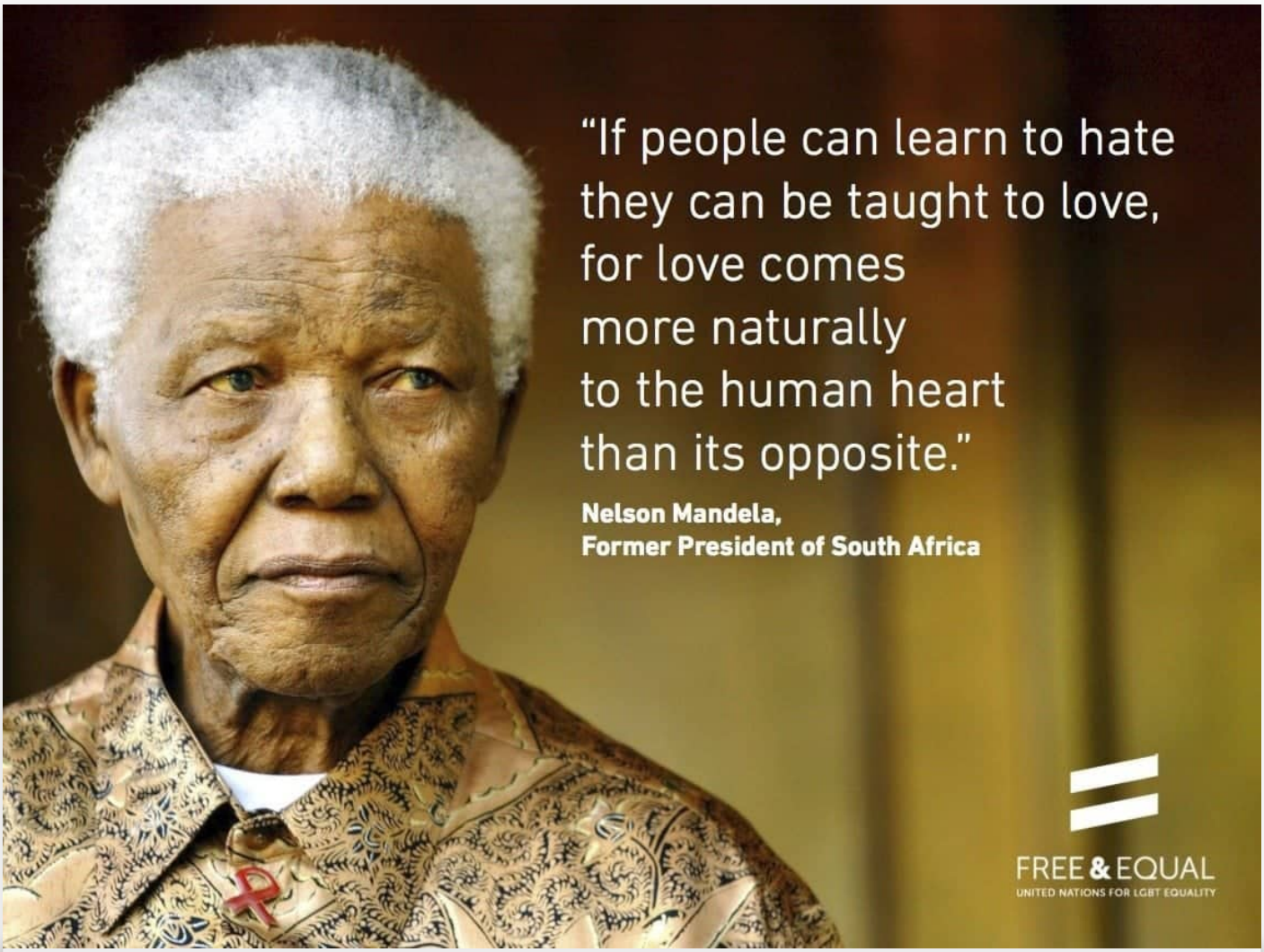
## Gay travel to South Africa

**South Africa almost ticks all the boxes – stunning destination to visit, a large, active LGBTQ community, and lots of queer hangouts** and events happening. The only downside is the violent crime so prevalent around the country which makes it a little bit dangerous for all travelers whether straight or gay. Obviously, if you stick to the areas you know are safe, it's absolutely fine!

South Africa is a nature lover's paradise, with **some of the best safaris in the world**. Other touristic highlights include the Kruger National Park, the Kgalagadi (Kalahari) Transfrontier Park, Stellenbosch, The Drakensberg, The Garden Route, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve, and Robben Island.

**Did you know?** Nelson Mandela is often regarded as the Grandfather of LGBTQ rights. When he became President in 1994, he immediately pushed for one of the most progressive constitutions the world has ever seen – the first one **ever** to outlaw discrimination based on who we love. *Big Daddy Nelson,* ***we salute you!***




*Wise words by the late Nelson Mandela!*

**HONORARY MENTIONS:**

**– Israel:** Tel Aviv is one of the gayest places on the planet and Tel Aviv Pride is one of the best pride events in the world! Israel sadly has rejected gay marriage 5 times but since 2006 it recognizes gay marriages from abroad.

## Gay tour of Thailand

Discover how Thailand earned its moniker ‘The Land of Smiles' on this awesome gay tour with Out Adventures. The boys over at OA run four annual departures through the country with stops in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Krabi, and Phuket. Their April departure even aligns with the country's famous Songkran water festival. As the old circuit ditty goes, **LET'S GET SOAKING WET!**

**Find out more**

**– Thailand**: **Thailand is super gay**! Bangkok has one of the best gay scenes in the world and we love it. Phuket and Pattaya also have large queer scenes, and islands like Koh Samui even have their own annual Pride. Thailand was

set to introduce civil union laws in 2020 but gay marriage is still a long way off. Read more about Bangkok in our **gay travel guide to Bangkok**.

***Now contrast this with the 5 most gay friendly countries in the Arab world…!***

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## For more inspiration:

- These are the gayest cities in Europe
- Find out what it's like to experience Barcelona Pride
- As well as the best gay cities in Spain for partying
- Find out which Caribbean islands are safe for gay travelers
- Check out our gay city guide to Amsterdam
- Read which places we rank as the top gay destinations in Europe
- As well as our guide to the gay resort town of Fort Lauderdale in Florida
- If you're heading to one of the pride events we've mentioned, find out the pride accessories you definitely need to bring with you
- And these great ideas for fabulous pride outfits!

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## *gay friendly countries*

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**Stefan Arestis**

Stefan is the co-founder, editor, and author of the gay travel blog nomadicboys.com. As a travel nerd, he has explored more than 80 countries across 5 continents. What he loves the most about traveling is discovering the local gay scene, making new friends, and learning new cultures. His advice about LGBTQ travel has been featured in Gaycation Magazine, Gaycities, Gay Times, Pink News, and Attitude Magazine. He has also written about gay travel for other non-gay-specific publications including Lonely Planet, The New York Times, The Guardian, and The Huffington Post. Stefan is also a qualified lawyer, having practiced as a commercial property litigator in London for over 10 years. He left his lawyer days behind to work full time on Nomadic Boys with his husband Sebastien. Find out more **about Nomadic Boys**.

Hello, Bonjour and Welcome to our travel blog. We are Stefan and Sebastien a French/Greek gay couple from London. Together, we have been travelling the world for over 10 years. Nomadic Boys is our gay travel blog showcasing all our travel adventures as a gay couple.

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